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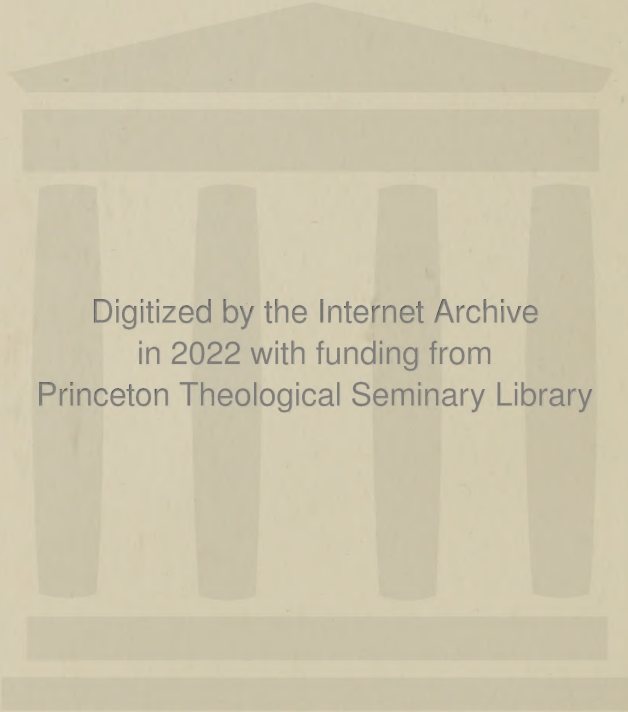
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A GOSPEL FOR THE NEW AGE



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# A Gospel *for the New Age*

*BEING THE REALITY OF RELIGION  
AS JESUS TAUGHT IT*

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BY  
REV. C. H. BUCHANAN

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To  
REV. JOHN A. KERN, D.D.

whose approval and personal  
friendship have long been to  
me a delight and inspiration  
to highest ideals and best en-  
deavors, this book is

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



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## FOREWORD

THIS is not a volume of sermons, but the discussion of certain subjects which are as vital to the new-age Christianity as the very air we breathe.

The world is already burdened with books; surely, therefore, there should be good reasons for another. The sea of thought has rarely been so unsettled and troubled by currents and cross currents, with here and there a dangerous rock beneath the surface. Wild vagaries are afloat, and the light of truth is needed as never before. No truth is self-sustaining. To live it must be restated again and again. Then there has never been an age just like ours, and for that reason history stands us little in hand as a guide. The issues of our own times must be met with courage and wisdom; and this volume is designed to answer just that purpose. In its pages there is no attempt to startle by novelty either in thought or expression; but the one ambition has been to present vital truths so that their light may shine out over the troubled waters and men may see above the fog a sparkle to warrant a fair haven. If this shall result, the years spent in gleaning the truths and the labor of preparing them for the press will not have been lost. With this pleasing hope the volume is sent forth upon its glad mission of service—to fall into unfriendly hands at times, but everywhere and always to plead the cause of religion as our Saviour taught it, dynamic and real, the world's greatest need at present.



Here let me acknowledge my very great debt of gratitude to certain authors for the keen pleasure and lasting benefit gotten from association with them while reading their books. When use has been made of their "wares," with pleasure credit has been given to whom due. This has been the invariable rule except when to do so would have burdened the page with trivial references. Who can trace the pedigree of all his thoughts? Were it possible, to do so would not be profitable. Our best thoughts have roots in what others have said; and perhaps our best work lies in burnishing and setting well the world's nuggets of golden truth.

Special mention should be made of Prof. T. F. Pierce, A.M.—late of the faculty of the University of Oklahoma—whose genial personality and accurate scholarship have been an inspiration, and whose time was freely given to proof reading the typewritten manuscript. To him and all others who have lent encouragement and aid, lasting gratitude is hereby expressed. C. H. BUCHANAN.

BALTIMORE CONFERENCE.

## CHAPTER I

THE NEW WORLD ERA: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE  
TIMES SPIRIT

## THE LURE OF THE TIMES

IN mankind's gloomiest hours  
    Hope sings her promise anew;  
From ashes of smoldering powers  
    New empires spring into view.

The shores of the tangible real  
    Are strewn with wrecks of the seen;  
Somewhere, instinctive felt, ideal,  
    Eternal sweet regions remain.

Behind us the ages are hoary,  
    Night's curtains are being unfurled;  
Before us vast sky beams of glory  
    Shoot up from an unseen world!

C. H. B.

## CHAPTER I

### THE NEW WORLD ERA: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE TIMES SPIRIT

THE world has had its recent era of darkness, its deluge of destruction, its horrors of war and death. But that was night; now the day is at hand. The dawn of a new age is gilding the hilltops with the glory of a far-flung optimism which fills the future with abundant hope. God is not done with this old world yet; therefore he turns the gaze of men away from the ruin they have wrought and lets them look upon a more inspiring scene. Where destruction and death once reigned, there is now new life; where there was disintegration, there are now new growth and high hope.

Was there ever such an age as this? That which every man had longed to see is now being realized—namely, an opportunity to act his part in the drama of life. On every hand there is a desire to “redeem the times,” an eagerness to answer the “bugle call of duty.” There is no need that any should stand idle all the day, for there is work enough for all.

#### THE TASK AWAITING

What is it that lends such a charm to the times and fills the morning of the new age with such zest? Is it not the greatness of the task to be accomplished, the heroism of having to reconstruct the world and bring order out of the present chaos and confusion?

But how shall we proceed with such an undertaking, and who can confront such a task and not feel the burden of it all? But how shall we build, and by what principles shall we be guided? One thing above all else is needful: there must be a solid foundation of recognized reality and established worth, sterling honesty and truth. Commonplace these? Yes; but, as Charles Wagner says, "Nothing is permanent but the everlasting commonplace."

In the task of world reconstruction we of to-day have a decided advantage over the builders of the past. We have their experience to guide us, their follies and failures to warn us of dangers, and their wisdom to steer us aright. It was a habit with Napoleon when he had suffered a defeat in battle to go back over the battle field and study the ground and see, if possible, what advantage his enemy may have had in position, so that he might never again fall into a like trap. The world to-day might do well to follow this bit of shrewd generalship.

#### CAUSES OF THE WORLD'S TROUBLES

What was it in recent history that brought the world to the chaotic condition which confronts us to-day and started the nations of earth to grappling at each other's throats? The causes were many, we well know, and a full exposé of them would tax our credulity and weary our patience. Yet a brief review is needful, for how else could we know the evils and avoid the dangers?

Among the first to be mentioned was the world's *lack of confidence*. Mutual trust between man and man, between peoples and nations, is the one founda-

tion on which all civilization, commerce, and religion must rest. Where this remains steadfast all else will be firm; but let this be lost, and all is chaos and confusion. When once lost it is most difficult to restore, and this is exactly our problem of to-day. The world has become very suspicious. Many things claim our confidence which cannot be trusted. Of such the world has had its fill; hence its first great impulse for permanency is a *demand for the real*, as a foundation upon which to rebuild the world. Our latest-developed instinct is a craving for ultimate truths. This principle applied to our Christian religion has given us a new heaven and a new earth. With confidence fully established in the messenger, it is not difficult to trust in the God who inspires the messenger. Just now, perhaps as never before, the world needs a trustworthy spokesman with a gospel of reality. In this fact alone lies the hope of rebuilding the tumble-down world. It is a well-established fact that the one destructive force back of the world's recent catastrophe was a lack of international confidence growing out of diplomatic insincerity—that serpent of evil coiled up in secret treaties between nations—and a desire, through the withholding of facts, to secure the mastery in world dominance. Unreality was the path down which the world rapidly went to ruin. It was a most painful fact that, when our diplomats had awakened the greatest world confidence in us as a nation and a time came to manifest a sublime and world-wide altruism, our statesmanship utterly failed. Words took the place of deeds.



## THE TOTTERING FOUNDATIONS

It is strange how easily men were led to believe that the crumbling of the foundations was an evidence of progress. Well-established truths, however real, were discarded for new theories. Men prided themselves on being liberal and broad, broke away from their moorings, and set sail on uncertain seas with no trained hand to guide. Forgetting that all worth-while life must rest somewhere, valuable opinions were discarded and "creeds" sneered at. There is nothing novel in the fact that many persons are opposed to any vital religious truth. Since the days of St. Paul the words of Christ have been foolishness to some and a stumblingblock to others. But the most alarming symptoms came to view when many of the orthodox members of some evangelical Churches took it up, and when dignified magazines voiced the same sentiment. Here and there a sensational preacher sprang up and traduced the Church which gave him his bread and slandered the blessed Lord who redeemed him. "The president of a well-known college," says Charles Jefferson, "began a book with the assertion that the 'current creed of Christianity is a chaos of contradictions.'" And to-day some of the most vital teachings of Christianity are wiped from the pages of public opinion. Yet the most heroic and triumphant days in the history of the Church were times when her devotees felt her doctrines stood for something and her mighty men died for the truth they taught. Thus it was that we have a Bible and a gospel and a Church to-day. But a man to do this must have

something to live for, some facts as starting points, and some principles as a polestar to be guided by.

The breaking away from the long-established standards of social obligations was the most alarming of all the tendencies in the last two decades. In well-nigh all countries of which history speaks mankind seemed possessed by some evil genius, and drifted rapidly into disregard of all discipline and healthful regard of law. Individuals set up their own authority against long-standing custom and tried laws. Parents seemed no longer to care to control their own children, and old-time family government has well-nigh disappeared from the face of the earth. Students in the schools and colleges followed in the same path, and "student control" became the style of the day. Mobs in the street defied police control, labor unions ruled in the wage market, while "big business" and commercial greed dominated legislative halls. Thus the world passed into a "dark and uncertain nebulous belt" when none saw whither it went. In politics and society, as well as in the home, the "age of revolution" was felt. Ancient landmarks were removed and venerable sanctions destroyed. Sacred authority and the call of Christ were challenged. The sanctity of the home and the marital vow came to be regarded as of little consequence. Divorce, like the breath of Satan, hissed in society. Children came to lose respect for parents, denying their wisdom and defying their authority. The charm and purity of country life were forgotten in the rush for the sensuous glare and lure of the city with its noisy streets and crowded "tenement flats." Those who were not taught in

childhood to regard parental authority in the home went forth as men and women without respect for State and national laws to become self-willed, perverse, and insubordinate citizens, to swell the criminal classes and crowd prison cells. It did not require the vision of a prophet of old to see what all this foreshadowed.

Nor is this the full story of the wave of folly that went on just prior to the outbreak of the Great War. Across the seas, perhaps more than in our homeland, the disintegration was felt. An eminent English divine reported conditions in his country thus: "The most deadly menace to our English life is found in the stream of prurient literature flowing from the press—much of it written by women! It apologizes for adultery, for the seducer, and for the harlot. It incites to lust and passion by investing them with a glamour they do not possess. It poisons the mind against the restraints of the marriage vow, and makes love and home life the butt of its ridicule. This is what it has come to by those who would emancipate themselves from the authority of the Bible."<sup>1</sup> They have no sovereign but their own wills and passions. In any land lascivious writers may disguise their propaganda with all possible grace of style, but what they call "liberty" is in reality licentiousness and moral rottenness. Nor is it surprising that there should be an attempt to dignify such a cult by pushing it into favor among cultured people. A generation who were without family restraint as they grew up would, from the very

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<sup>1</sup>"The Gospel of Sovereignty," by J. D. Jones, p. 123. (George H. Doran Co.)

habit of self-indulgence, likely produce that class of young writers who present the "Freudian point of view," which holds that "the trouble with American life, at the root, is due to age-long and cankering inhibitions, attributable to our traditional Puritanism. The remedy is a drop to the instinctive level; open the floodgates to impulse; a free and spontaneous doing as one pleases in all directions."<sup>2</sup> Along this line one finds books written and offered to the public with the dignified title of "The New Psychology"; many of them are translations from a Teutonic language, with which our American nation has little in common at present, and whose philosophy we dare not always adopt.

The motto of the "new morality" is, *realize thyself*, little considering that there are in every man two distinct selves, one of which looks upward and struggles for the mastery in the attainment of perfect manhood, while the other looks downward and aimlessly drifts toward the bestial. What is this but the way of the uncurbed boy of the street whom no one admires and of whom no one prophesies good? Yet this is taken as a philosophy and urged as the way of life. Along this line much of the world's history has been made of late.

There is an element of truth in the statement that the malady of our civilization is "suppressed desires"; but there are, in truth, desires and desires. In every normal soul there is a desire for the mastery in selfhood, for the perfection of personality; to indulge this is highly commendable, and altruistic

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<sup>2</sup>"The Genius of America," by Sherman, p. 224. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)



brotherliness is eminently right. To suppress these would be an evil. But men are tragically wrong if they think that our national malady is due to any suppression of nature by religious restraints, or that evil can be cured by the removal of these religious restrictions and the release of animal tendencies—views championed by much of the “new thought,” not to say gilded libertinism, of the day.

### THE RESTLESS HUMANITY

Now, could there be anything more logical than that this “time spirit” should produce a world-wide restlessness and dissatisfaction, and many should be brought to realize that the times were fearfully out of harmony? While some men, who have no fixedness of convictions in their make-up, interpreted all this as an evidence of progress, as if all motion were progress, there were others with a deeper insight who felt that some mighty catastrophe awaited mankind. While steam and electricity have created a new industrial world, they have not improved the social and moral life of the people. By amassing humanity in great cities all social problems have been enormously intensified. The principles of Christianity, “the science of living together,” have been largely ignored. In the rush and strife of the city crime is multiplied and lust and greed fasten their shackles on millions and defy the approach of religion. Yet, in grappling with these problems, men seem not to think of stopping the leak, but set frantically to work bailing out the water, saying: “We must confront these problems; we must grapple with these terribly dangerous evils.”

So they began to agitate reform movements, to build "settlement houses," soup kitchens, and co-operative homes—all of which contributes to the relief of the situation, to some extent, but none of them goes to the root of difficulty. Every one nowadays believes in dealing directly with such problems, and money in abundance is available for clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and for teaching nimble fingers to earn a living; yet social frivolity and moral degeneracy have been fearfully on the increase.

The world seems to be losing the instinct of moral values—the sense of the distinction of character—in social intercourse and commercial dealings. In former years mothers were very careful concerning the companionship of their children and the selection of their life companions; but now parents seem not concerned about such matters. In other days "charity covered the multitude of faults"; now it is the "big bank account" and the clothes that money will buy. Once a famous orator said, "I would rather be right than to be president"; now too often the motto is: "Succeed honestly if you can, but succeed." Human life has long been considered the most precious of all values; then with what a shudder one learns that the recent Near East strife, with its suffering and death to millions of helpless people, was all born of the struggle for the mastery between nations for an Eastern oil field! In this deal several of the great nations stand condemned.

#### DOCTRINAL BREAKDOWN

During the last generation people grew amazingly slack in matters of belief and in their manner of



worship. The stately old hymns were discarded for the lighter gospel hymns and sacred songs. The old hymns were noble expressions of religious truths; the new are often only bursts of rapturous sentiment.

In the atmosphere of secular colleges and universities there grew up, among students and professors alike, a pronounced repugnance to the bondage of the established forms of denominational subscription, indicating a weakening in loyalty to the old faiths. One church came to be regarded as good as another; and religious sociability came to take the place of the old-time heartfelt religion. Church union got in the air, and into the common fold all were invited—Unitarians, Evangelicals, Trinitarians, notwithstanding the compromises which must be made in matters of faith—and all alike were welcomed. To cap the climax a “World’s Congress of Religions” was staged, where every shade and kind of religion was made welcome. Pagans and Christians, Orientals and Westerners, all found seats side by side, and the religion of each passed under review. In that great religious pageant the religion which could blow the loudest horn was allowed to “ride in the band wagon,” and this men called “religious progress.”

That many good people lost moorings in matters of faith was evidenced in the estimate given Ralph Waldo Emerson, once pastor of the Second Unitarian Church, Boston. While pastor there he delivered his famous sermon, the only sermon he ever published, in which he declared that he could not in administering the Lord’s Supper use the words: “This is my blood of the new covenant, shed for you

and for many, for the remission of sins." But the congregation demanded the rite after the old form. This Mr. Emerson felt he could not consistently administer; so, after due deliberation, he gave up the pastorate of his only church. Yet to the end of his days this man remained a "saint." Charles Jefferson tells us that "one of the most orthodox of evangelical preachers, Father Taylor, declared that he had never known so good a Christian as Mr. Emerson."<sup>3</sup>

As an evidence of the colorless cast of Christianity of the day, a writer in the *Independent*, in contending that the decadence in the Churches made no decadence in morals, pointed to the fact that many of the best people she knew no longer cared to attend church; and in proof of her contention she cited the fact that "the leaders in the 'Reform Movements' in New York never went to church." In line with this same tendency goes the fact of the alarming doctrinal latitude in the minds of many who are considered orthodox Christians. The Virgin birth of Christ, the reality of his miracles, his resurrection, his incarnation and redemption through his blood, the new birth, heaven and hell, have all, to some minds, passed from the realm of reality into the fog of myths and dreams. Yet many say: "Let them pass. The Sermon on the Mount is amply sufficient." Others still more reckless go still further and say: "The Golden Rule is sufficient; with this what care we for more?" At this low ebb of fidelity, how men are driven about by every wind of doctrine! They give encouragement to every sort of fad and

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<sup>3</sup>"Minister as Prophet," p. 155. (Crowell Publishing Co.)

faker who comes along. Many of the leading members in such movements as Dowieism, Russellism, Adventism, Christian Science, and the like were once "members in good standing" in many of the leading orthodox Churches. The man whose name stood at the head of the list of supporters of the beautiful new Christian Science temple off Central Park, New York, was a son of one of the most illustrious Presbyterian families in that city.<sup>4</sup> Officials in the Protestant Churches in Washington contributed to build a Buddhist temple in that city. False Christs gathered devotees, not from the credulous world only, but from the bosom of some of the most prominent Churches. Possibly there never was an age when there were so many and so subtle temptations to reduce the Christian religion to a mere ethical code. And never was the prestige of the Church quite so low.

Nor does the evil end here; it gets into the very lifeblood of the people and manifests its nature in various directions. A nondecisive doctrinal belief is indicative of imperfect knowledge of or careless dealing with the facts of religion. This indifference to facts and their source lets a people think of God as an *idea* only, and not in the strictest sense a living Person. There is a widespread tendency to distrust the idea of personality in general. This fact emerges in regard to immortality. "A great many people profess themselves willing to believe in human immortality so long as that does not imply personal immortality. This is one of those loose conceptions of life cherished as a refuge from difficulties, which are

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<sup>4</sup>"Minister as Prophet," p. 158. (Crowell Publishing Co.)

entirely elusive and misleading. This conception of immortality can give satisfaction to one only so long as he does not examine the words he uses." Nonpersonal immortality must in every sense reduce itself ultimately to something like absorption into the general scheme of things, the widely embracing universe into which the individual soul returns and into which it merges itself. It may suggest a set of noble ideas about joining

"The choir invisible  
Of those immortal dead who live again  
In lives made better by their presence."

"To religious sentimentalism this is very pleasant and alluring and is exactly suited to the age and in keeping with much of the shallow religion afloat. This is a sort of a something about which it is easy to write poetry."<sup>5</sup> But with all that, one fact remains—it is not *Christianity*! Such a dream of immortality follows in the line of the conception of God not as a Person but a mystical Entity diffused throughout all space.

#### AS OTHERS VIEW US

The world's estimate of America's finance, her diplomacy, her inventive skill and individual initiative is of the highest order. But what of America's religion? That, of course, is just the estimate we put upon it ourselves. As compared with money values, what rank has religion among us? It is an admitted fact that everywhere in America religion

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<sup>5</sup>"Foundations of Faith," by Kelman, p. 83. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)



is at an appallingly low ebb. Whose fault is this? When our English brethren visit us, they go home and talk about us; and this is what they tell: "The American preachers are brilliant; they know a great many things and are well educated; but they are not spiritual. They are lacking in religious fervor and fiery passion for souls." And they tell a damaging truth. This they say of the preachers; but are the laymen any more pious? We have beautiful forms of worship and the ritual is gone through with gracefully; but the enthusiasm is not in it, and the inspiration is not there. Many of those who do faithfully attend public worship have lost interest, and the masses have drifted away. The heart hunger for God is seldom felt, and the "burden of souls" is an unknown experience. Can there be any wonder if the world loses faith in a Church which has lost faith in God and knows little of the vital realities of true godliness? No one who truly knows the world as it is to-day can doubt that in its innermost soul it is skeptical and cold all because of the waning of vital godliness in the Churches, together with stressing of material things to the neglect of the spiritual. See how many have lost the "power of an endless life" and are grasping after the visible and temporal!

### THE SHRINE OF SUCCESS

There is one word most characteristic of the American people, and that word tells at what shrine they bow. The wonderful history of the continent may to a large extent be the explanation of this trait. No other word so largely fills the American mind as the idea of *success*, nor is the manner of achieving



it always considered. Mothers are still anxious for their children; but it is not so much that they make noble, upright men and women; but it is that they may make a success—that the boys should become money-making men, and the girls marry well-to-do men. Culture and refinement now, as a first consideration for their daughters, is a “back number” with many parents. Worldly prosperity is everything. All business is conducted on the basis of success, rather than as a public utility. A book is a success, not because it is timely and sane and filled with noble ideals and packed with truth, but because it sells by the half million copies. Great scientists like Davie, Faraday, and Agassiz could have made fortunes out of their discoveries; but they cared more for science than for gold. To-day the rush is for the patent office to secure a patent and become rich. A preacher is rated a “success” not because he preaches the gospel truly, but because he “brings up his finances.” Jehovah is the God of many Americans in times of trouble and at death’s door; otherwise they bow around the shrine of success. At this same shrine worship the many whose methods of obtaining money are hidden and not righteous. These all bow together with the bediamonded kings of finance, the silk-attired and jeweled queens of society, and the high-steeple divines whose stipend equals that of the governor of the State.

These all worship at the shrine of “Success” so long as her bounty is poured into their laps. But put this whole company into Job’s sackcloth and ashes, and what will they say: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him”? The presumption is that the

wail would be: "Let us curse God and die." But will such character stand the test?

### TESTED IN WAR'S FLAMES

A decade ago it had become increasingly evident that there was something radically wrong with our civilization. The world seemed to be in the grasp of an evil power and unable to extricate itself. The world was never more advanced and civilized, never more refined and cultured, and yet never more restless and dissatisfied. Crime was on every hand; life was never so insecure nor the future quite so dark. If science or culture could have saved the world, it would gladly have done so. The scientists were saying that the world is too much civilized and scientific to go to war; its difficulties will be otherwise settled. Men of commerce said that war costs too much; men cannot afford it. They love money too much to go into a pandemonium of destruction. Statesmen said that we will settle our world disputes in the "parliament of man," so diplomats were pitting diplomacy against diplomacy to maintain equity among nations and keep the world at peace. Others there were who said that the world is too good for the horrors of war. The brotherhood of man has advanced too far; the world will not go to war, for humanity's sake. Others again trusted to Christian refinement to dominate the minds of men. But the war followed, with all its terrible tide of destruction of life and property—the most stupendous folly since the crucifixion of Christ.

But why did the bulwarks of society give way when they were needed most? The one verdict is,

they gave way because the world had come to look to the shadow and not the substance, the form, not the fact, and to trust in creed rather than in Christ himself. When men set their hearts on material things, trusting to a pagan commerce, an agnostic science, a civilization made up of unredeemed mankind which forgets God and repudiates his authority, and looks to a religion without the Spirit of God in it, what wonder that the world went to pieces as it did in nineteen hundred and fourteen to eighteen?

The ancient unrepealed law is: "Thou shall have no other gods before me." Knowing the world condition to have been what it was when the Word War broke out, was there any wonder that when a reckless Serbian youth threw the explosive bomb into the sulphurous atmosphere three hundred billions of the world's dollar gods went up in war smoke and down tumbled much of the world's cob-house civilization and its trash was consumed in the flames? Why should not such trash be consumed? It had become a burden to the world, and doubtless God himself had become tired of such folly, or he would not have turned the world over to evil men to work all manner of destruction with greediness.

Empty-handed and distressed, men came at last to turn their faces up to the God of all grace, who was evidently bringing mankind back to the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, and to-day he is prompting men to reconstruct the world on a saner foundation. The bankrupt nations and hungry people are looking to God's children for help. Even Wall Street sent out through government

channels an appeal to Christian ministers, asking for the agitation of common honesty and fair dealing, saying: "Without your help our vaults are worthless."

But why this appeal to an institution which during the early days of the World War was pronounced a "failure," and when such men as Edward Carpenter, Charles A. Ellwood, and others of a more questionable type are saying, "The hour of its exit has come"? But is Christianity dead? What are some of the facts? Immediately after the close of the Great War the evangelical Churches placed upon Christ's altar millions upon millions for Missions, for Christian Education, for feeding and clothing the distressed and starving nations, all for the ongoing of the kingdom. Great publishers began to turn out streams of most excellent religious books, and the largest single order for Bibles ever known came into the American Bible Society. Add to this the fact that the 1923 religious report shows the largest annual accession to the Christian Church in all its illustrious history. Are these the throes of death, the agonies of a discarded institution? Nay; but are they not the evidence of pulsing power of life reaching out for greater conquests?

Thoughtful men everywhere had come to realize that the world, and not Christianity, had failed; and while the nations were writhing in their defeat and follies, the religion of Christ was hoisting her sails and proclaiming: "All hail, illustrious Future!" This she does with the realization that being entrenched in vital religion is the strength of nations and the hope of the future. This is the most stable



something in all the world, and the something around which all world reconstruction must stand. Without this, with its foundation in God and eternity, there can be no lasting confidence between man and man or permanent national hope. Herein all confidence lives, all obligations rest. The thoughtless world clamors for Christian sentiment; but the practical world needs, more than anything else, the realities of religion as Jesus taught it. This it needs to clear the uncertain skies, to cleanse individual lives, and to inspire new hope in a despondent world. Lessing once said: "Christianity has been tried for eighteen hundred years, but it still remains to try the religion of Jesus." The Churches are trying all sorts of substitutes—suppers, lyceum lectures, pageants, community programs, etc. What they need is to take the advice of the great editor, Horace Greeley, and "*try religion.*"

For this we plead: *Try religion as Jesus taught it*, pure and simple—religion with the idea of God as a Father revealed in his Son, with the new birth or human redemption as the hope of humanity, with the Spirit's indwelling, sweet and sane holy living, and the ultimate conversion of the world. Such a religion the world seems to have forgotten, hence it welters and gropes in defeat. Having learned to plate baser metals to resemble real gold, the world wants to palm off on needy humanity and a righteous God a camouflaged religion; but God is not mocked, neither are men deceived. They know the sad consequences of such folly.

The old world is in a sad plight. With all its scientific discoveries, all of its wisdom and its radio



system to speak to all the earth, it has no message and nothing to say. How hopeless and leaderless the nations of earth are to-day! But out of the depths comes the sad appeal for help. During the days when "the angel of death spread his wings on the blast," men did not care to hear of boasted scientific discovery or the discussion of unsettled religious questions. During such days the men said: "Away with your 'sob stuff'; give us real religion." Only this can strengthen the hero, maintain morale, and comfort the dying. Though the bugle call to arms is hushed and our flag is no longer at half-mast, the warfare of life is still on and the foe is deeply entrenched. Practical business men do not hesitate to say, with Judge Ben H. Lindsey, that the "failure of modern religion and education is to blame for the breakdown in society. The Church has lost its grip because of its own condition."<sup>6</sup> In like strain is the statement that "what we need is to get back to the religion of Christ."<sup>7</sup>

With such an appeal we face the issue, not with the gospel of uncertainty, negations, and doubt; nay, not that; but with the gospel of *certainty*, the gospel of *affirmation* and of the *eternal verities*, for only this is dynamic, only this a glorious reality. With such a gospel as this, its banners flung out to the breezes and our face to the future, is there any wonder we thrill with the thought:

"Out of the depths of the night  
The world rolls into the light;  
It is daybreak everywhere!"

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<sup>6</sup> *Denver Dispatch*, September 11, 1923.

<sup>7</sup> Muskogee Chamber of Commerce, Oklahoma, 1922.

## CHAPTER II

RELIGION: THE GREATEST REALITY, THE FOUNDATION  
PRINCIPLE

## RELIGION

RELIGION is no low-bred thing,  
Though cast in common clay.  
She, wafted hence on angel wing  
From far-off realms of day,  
Hath come at Love's behest to heed  
Man's supreme soul demand  
And, in his darkest hour of need,  
Walk with him hand in hand.

Her spirit steals into the heart  
Like sunshine into life;  
And beauty rare she doth impart  
To man's hard battle strife;  
And by her winsome mystic charm  
In love's soft accent sweet,  
Life's dull discord she doth transform  
And crown with joy replete.

. . . . .  
And should the noble hero soul,  
On splendid conquest bent,  
Let vision fade and ardor cool  
In brooding discontent—  
'Tis then she whispers sweet and clear  
Her inspirations high:  
Behold the tide of life is here,  
The promised day is nigh!

C. H. B.

## CHAPTER II

### RELIGION: THE GREATEST REALITY, THE FOUNDATION PRINCIPLE

LIFE is ever struggling to express itself anew; and since religion is the emotion of a living soul, what wonder that there should be repeated efforts to tell what religion really is?

If asked why I am religious, my answer would be: "Because I cannot help it."<sup>1</sup> I was born that way and cannot unmake myself. To say that religion is an inheritance from our ancestors would be only to shove the problem of its origin back into the darkness of the past. Where did our ancestors get their religion? The instinct is in man, the world is full of it, and it is the most dynamic something with which we have to deal. As such it attracts attention and challenges investigation.

What is religion? A good and satisfactory definition is most difficult to write for the reason that every man has his individual religious experience and no one definition would exactly fit all cases, but would vary as widely as the dispositions of men. Ask a deeply pious man what religion is, and no doubt he would answer: "My religion is a deep and real sentiment within me, sustaining and satisfying my soul, which makes me want to know God and seek to do his will." Yet this is, in fact, a description and not a definition of what religion is. It

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<sup>1</sup>Sabatier.

tells briefly how that something within affects him, rather than to set forth what it is or whence it came.

Who does not feel that religion, like speech, is a part of himself, springing from a fountain fixed deep in his nature? Man, having the power of speech, goes on talking without ever asking why. Language has grown, though mankind was hardly conscious of its growth. It grew out of the ability to utter sounds as the symbols of thought; and the mental capacity to think thoughts and express them is termed the "faculty of speech." So with religion. As a potent principle it is at least the assertion of a conscious power within. In this subjective sense it can be said that while there are many "religions" in the world, they all have one source—namely, a religious nature out of which the many religions spring.

Thus we may safely speak of religion as a permanent and universal element in man. Mankind in general has a sense of natural imperfection, a feeling of dependence, an inclination to veneration and devotion. These man feels without being able to understand why. In fact, these emotions are the first principles of his religion, and he does not need to know just why he was thus created.

That this latent power so common to man and planted deep in his nature should vary in process of development is not at all surprising, since there are natural causes back of the variations. That which is generic in man as a whole expresses itself in his religion, and man's natural spontaneity is seen here as elsewhere. Man develops religion in keeping with his individuality and environment. Man in



all stages of life has a tendency to be influenced by his surroundings. Hence there is in history a pagan religion, a Greek and Roman and a Christian religion, embodying racial and age peculiarities, whether ancient or modern, Oriental or Western.

That the general term "religion" is expressive of a world-wide feature of humanity needs little more than a statement. All around the globe and as far back as the light of history reaches religious beliefs and customs are to be found. Corresponding to these beliefs and customs are devout feelings, an acknowledgement of an occult supernaturalism, a power greater than man that should be propitiated. "There are certain devotions, such as prayers, praises, and sacrificial offerings, with corresponding emotions, such as awe, fear, hope, joy, a desire to please the God or gods—sometimes displeasure and rebuke when protection and blessings are thought to be withheld." These we recognize as the common emotions of religion, many of which are prominent in our Christianity to-day. Yet, notwithstanding the common basis of all religions, there are found in our Christianity certain elements distinctively its own, giving it superiority.

### WHENCE CAME RELIGION?

So essential is religion in the nature of man, pervading and dominating his individual and social life, that science, inquiring into the origin and nature of things, has come up face to face with the question: How did mankind become religious?

How did man acquire the religious habit? May not his worshiping tendencies indeed be the result of

“sensations,” the product of certain vibrations disturbing the gray matter of the brain? Could it not have been possible for the plastic mind of man to have been so impressed by environment as to have developed the habit of worship which has by the laws of heredity become a fixed fact in life? But to entertain such an idea would be to admit of “spontaneous generation,” which theory has broken down under severe tests, and is as absurd in religion as it has been found to be in biology.

Again, could man's religion not possibly have been caught from dreams or evolved from fear, as many have long tried to make it appear? One of the Latin poets said: “It was fear that engendered the gods.” Now, there is an extent to which this is true. One must admit that religion may have been awakened by terror when the utter helplessness of mankind was realized. Thrown out as but a child, exposed to the dangers of nature as found in storms, diseases, and death, his would be a state of misery and distress which would fill his heart at times with unlimited terror. To seek assistance under such conditions would be a most natural impulse. But why “the gods” rather than some material protection? Would not the protection of his cave dwelling, his club, and his spear have been sufficient? What could have suggested to the child mind of primitive man the existence of a superhuman Intelligence to be sought as Friend or propitiated as a powerful, dreaded enemy? But why should the sense of fear be connected with religion at all? Do not the lower creatures in impending danger show a mastering sense of fear? Yet we do not call this religion. How does

man's fear differ from theirs? The difference comes in the fact of man's religious nature by the help of which he seeks to rise above danger and be rid of terror. Fear in itself is not religion; it paralyzes, crushes, and stuns. In order that fear may become religiously fruitful it must be mixed with an impulse of hope. It is necessary that man, the prey of fear, should find above him a source of help and strength by which to confront the danger and overcome it. Fear has an element of religion in it only when it awakens a sense of personal dependence and calls forth prayer, which opens up a way out of human distress. The one great question of humanity in religion is always salvation, and any experience which gives coloring to this hope is indeed blessed.

It cannot be doubted that religion was at first called forth to a large extent by a sense of dependence and at times fear; but if there were no latent religion asleep in the soul, as the forest is folded up in the acorn, how could it ever have been awakened? Fear never was and in reality never can be religion. At best it can only reveal man's need of safety, and perchance lead him to exercise his religious privileges of prayer and righteous hope and trust in God. But the nature of holiness is such as to preclude the possibility of fear having originated religion.

Neither could religion have been planted in man by a "pious priesthood," as is sometimes held. True, religion has largely spread over the earth by evangelism. Yet one has but to ask, Where did the priests first get their religion; who were their primogenitors, to give them first lessons in "holy exercises"? The priest has had his task, drawing out the latent re-

ligions of the people, and he is a mighty power in all religions.

### THE BIBLE AND RELIGION

Did religion not come out of the Bible? At present the Bible is looked to as the fountainhead of religion. It is used largely as the best means of establishing Christianity everywhere. But religion did not originate in the sacred Scriptures. The patriarchs were profoundly religious long before the Scriptures were written. If there were no religious nature in man, the Bible would be a meaningless book, if indeed it could have been written. It is for us the treasury of religious truths—the story of God's dealings with men and his will concerning them. If the Bible were lost, holy men would set about to write another one. In fact, holy men have never ceased to write as they are moved by the Holy Spirit. The revelation of God continues, because we have not an extinct Divinity or an exhausted Providence.

While religion did not originate with priests or in the Scriptures, yet these agencies serve best in the propagation of religion. They satisfy our needs and inspire a religious zeal, or may prevent or correct an error. But they could not have planted the original spark in the soul of man or awakened that which was never inherent. We have excellent authority for thinking that man was created to seek the Lord "if haply he might feel after him, and find him."

### RELIGION NOT A HUMAN PRODUCT

If religion were a normal or human product and everywhere subject to rational analysis, then phi-



losophy would be the means by which its contents might be determined, and *rationalism* would be our proud boast. In this case the Bible would be admittedly no whit different from any other profound book, and that which has held its place through the centuries as the one inerrant inspired volume would be found the most stupendous fraud of all. But *truth* alone, and not fraud, can keep its hold upon the human heart through the vicissitudes of the troubled ages and amid the changes incident to the progress of man and the advancement of learning. If, on the other hand, it be admitted that religion came as "a revelation to the race"—an added force which at a certain stage of human development was impressed from without—then it were manifest that reason was not capable of arriving at the great fact, else it would have been left for man to make the grand discovery. Again, after religion had been discovered, it would still be necessary to show that it brings to man an adequate fulfillment of all his spiritual needs—wants which reason may cherish but can never satisfy. To show that reason could satisfy the needs of the soul would of itself be indeed a most difficult problem.

To say that religion is a "mystery" is not convincing; such a position would be to take refuge in darkness. There are features in religion—the spiritual birth is one—which do not admit of rational explanation, just as there are depths in the human mind which no metaphysician has ever sounded. A religion which could not be intelligently considered would be a "curiosity," a gross superstition, and devoid of all connection with religious needs, hence



useless to hungry hearts and therefore unworthy of dignified consideration. True, the word "mystery" was often upon the lips of the apostles, and a few times used by our Lord himself. But when used by them it implied "that which is known only to the initiated," which was far different from a something incomprehensible to man. The "mystery" of which they spoke was none other than the long-kept secret of God's plan of salvation which, "when the fullness of time had come," was manifest in Christ Jesus and was felt in the hearts of all who believed on his name. In them it shone as a great light which should henceforth enlighten the world. To the unconverted to-day the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed a "mystery." They see its effects, but know not the secret of its power.

While we prize our religion as the highest and most sacred deposit of human life, what shall we say it really is? Shall we class it, as do some, with "social force"? or shall we regard it as a "mode of emotion" as Lecky does? Shall we call it, with Kant, "the recognition of all our duties and divine commands," or with Spencer, "an awe in the presence of the mystery of an inscrutable power in the universe"? Shall we think of it as Mill did, as "the infinite nature of duty," or with Schleiermacher, as "the immediate feeling of dependence upon God," or with Matthew Arnold, as "morality touched by emotion," or with Pascal, "God at work in the soul"? All these express rather the outward manifestation of religion, as a scientist would view it, without going to the depth of the thing itself. Without man's social relation with his fellows he might never be

thrilled by its peace, yet religion is constitutional, inalienable, spiritual. The elemental potentiality of religion is always present. Social relations call its faculties into exercise and furnish a field of fruitage.

### RELIGION DEFINED

Religion, as a natural characteristic and essential element in the constitution of man, is purely of divine origin. Its emotions are as instinctive as any that man experiences. It is therefore admissible to speak of religion, in its origin and emotions, as *the result of a divine and supersensible influence exerted upon the inner life of man*—"where piety is there God is at work"<sup>2</sup>—*by which intuitions other than reason arise, such as the senses could never supply. These constitute just those phenomena which thrust themselves upon us with immediate certainty.* These impulses every devout soul has felt, and he asks no greater proof than his own experience. This fact is true of all alike. Mankind could hardly have conceived of a Supreme Being and come to worship him without at the same time feeling that the Great Spirit entered into communication with man. Doubtless the germ of this truth lies in the "still small voice" heard in the soul, which man did not originate and of which he cannot wholly dispossess himself.

### AN ACTIVE PRINCIPLE

Thus far religion has been approached from its passive side and considered purely as a "natural gift." Yet this is but half the truth. To know what

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<sup>2</sup>Pascal.

religion really is, not only its passive nature, but its active character must be considered.

Human personality appears more definitely at this point than in any other of man's relation. In religion, as in connection with all other gifts, the real benefit depends upon the use man makes of it; therefore, if left dormant and neglected in the soul or perverted by misuse, it may not prove a blessing, but become a detriment. Much of the dissipation of mankind can be traced directly to the feeding a religiously hungry soul, not upon the food God meant it to have, but upon some husks of material things.

There may not be any practical benefit in merely possessing a religious nature. A very bad man may have that as truly as a good one. What man needs is a "religious character." What does it signify if, while one's nature is feeling after God, his life is utterly against him? A man may have a natural sense of honor, but this does not make him an honorable man when he betrays every trust and violates every bond of friendship. Even a thief may have a fine sense of justice and be all the more conscious of his own guilt because of it. There may be a wonderfully tender sensibility in the heart of an assassin, such that in the presence of his family or his clan he will be abundant in gentle and kind offices. Of Robert G. Ingersoll it was said by his own niece, "Uncle Robert would not harm a worm"; yet this same tender-hearted man, in conversation with a grief-stricken mother who cherished a Bible hope of once more meeting her angel babe, brutally declared: "Your Bible is a myth, madam; you have

no hope." A man may have the finest reverence for God, the highest admiration for his character, the greatest rational conception of the value of God's moral government in the world, and yet not have so much as a spark of real piety. He may enjoy the greatness and goodness of God without a trace of a real religious character.

"The religious nature, as a mere natural tendency, is as different from a religious character as what we are by nature is different from what we do, definitely seek, and freely become." The life of choice is the something for which we are responsible. Character is found in that which the soul deliberately goes after, with a reigning devotion—what it selects and lives for as an end. If a man, therefore, lives for himself, for the world, as all sinners do, he is without God and without religious character, and is all the more guilty in it, since his nature is feeling after God in the throes of disappointed longing. Then let it be understood that souls were made for God. They are to live, move, and have their being in him—not as omniscience, but as an inwardly felt presence. They are to know God as they know themselves. Nothing but a voluntary surrender of the whole life to God's will prepares the soul to be set in the open before its God. No emotion of mere natural sentiment will suffice. It is only as God comes into the soul and lives in it that religious character begins. The soul, though it may be feeling instinctively after God, if baffled still and kept back by self-will and self-devotion, has no trace of real piety. But when it communes knowingly with God, receives



him, and walks with him, then it is the *reality* of *religion* is discovered.

On the other hand, this natural gift of a religious nature may not only be left undeveloped, but abused till men are deluded into believing themselves to be skeptical—that there is no God. But they cannot get away from the memory of its influence. Reckless, sinful men may seem to forget religion; but in times of great danger, such as facing death on the battle field, they remember that there is a God. Often, after spending years in sin and in blaspheming against God, men have come, as did Commodore C. Vanderbilt, to regret the absence of religious influences in early life, and die trusting in God.<sup>3</sup> The wickedness of men cannot destroy the groundwork of God in the soul. By neglect personal piety may become a negligible quantity. Such was clearly the case with an illustrious scientist. After spending years in scientific research to establish his fond theory of “natural selection,” during which time he scarcely gave a thought to the cravings of his own soul, he came to lose all æsthetic sensibility, including even his fondness for music and the poetry of Shakespeare. When interviewed on the subject and asked if he had not at some time in his life felt a fondness for such things and felt the call of God in his soul, he dreamily replied, “Yes, but it seems so far away”—thus admitting the logical sequence. In his own experience his fond theory of “evolution” had operated in the opposite direction. In place of “evoluting” him up toward perfect manhood, where mystic sweetness was real and his soul in tune with

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<sup>3</sup> “Life of C. F. Deems,” p. 271. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)



the infinite, it had pulled him down to where his life was deflowered of its chief charms which make life worth the living and the future worth aspiring unto. As in primitive races, religion may be so low in grade and so hidden as to escape detection. Yet, as the missionaries have found, even there the faculty is latent and may be readily developed—showing that man as such is a religious being.

#### AS SEEN IN MATURE LIFE

With certain writers it is quite a habit to resort to the jungle and study conditions there to learn what religion in primitive man was. But while religion is a race heritage with us to-day, what it was in pre-historic man is purely a guess, and will remain so till it can be learned just what we have lost or gained in the long process of development. In determining man's other powers, we do not study him in infancy or adolescence alone, but in his mature state. In all adult races religion exists. Man did not abandon it as he did his stone implements and cave dwellings. Doubtless religion has intensified as man progressed, and in civilized and enlightened man it more nearly reaches scientific expression, and its highest forms are more significant of its real nature. Not as it is manifest in the grotesque superstitions of the savage, but as we know it to-day and feel its power within us, does it arrest our attention and challenge investigation.

There is in the matured Christian a craving after a "final cause"; and this craving can no more be extinguished than can be man's belief in "objective reality." The most hopeful indication of our age

and chief characteristic of the times is an *instinctive* longing for the truth—a decided “*passion for reality*.” This is the prime incentive in all our scientific research, and should be the soul of all critical effort in literature. It is the foundation of all true learning. This “passion” has been faithfully at work in our theology; and while it may have spoiled many of our dogmas, it could not but have stabilized our faith. The time may have been when men could be satisfied with “pious frauds” and risk their immortal hopes on mere superstitions; but at the cost of martyred millions that day has passed, and now the cry is: “At whatever cost, let us have the truth.” All else must fade and be forgotten. The modern man is out for *realities*, and he feels heartsick in the atmosphere of dreams. He wants ethical results in his religion most of all. Said Thomas Carlyle, the apostle of the real: “A man’s religion is the greatest fact in his life.” Of his own books he said: “I have but one thing to say from beginning to end of them all, and that is, there is no other reliance for this world on any other, but just Truth. And if men do not want to be damned eternally, they had better give up lying and all other kinds of falsehood.” In this he speaks as the high priest of reality. Who can feel safe under any other régime? What soul could be satisfied with that which he must suspect as being untrue? As the mind craves knowledge and the heart affection, so the soul demands truth. Whatever else may be fictitious, a man’s religion must be true. The polarity of his soul, expressed in his religious instincts, is not false. This is the guiding star of his

destiny and brings him into the possession of the "pearl of great price"—the completion of being.

It is this fact of the *real* in our religion that gives it the hold upon the hearts of men from which no amount of persecution has ever been able to dislodge it. Under the spell of its power mankind has been urged forward toward an ever-increasing predominance of the soul over the life of the flesh, piloted by the hope of some day reaching that cosmic stage wherein the will of God shall be done upon earth as it is done in heaven, and the spirit of the Master reign supreme among men.

Out of the fidelity of those men whose lives have been given over to the ways of the Spirit and in whom religion has been allowed to fill all its offices have come some of the most thrilling chapters of human history replete with sublimest heroism in the noblest accomplishments of life.

Sir William Hamilton said: "There is nothing great on earth but man, and nothing great in man but mind." But Sir William was a metaphysician, else he would have gone further and added, "There is nothing great in mind but religion," since it is this "life of God in the soul" which differentiates man from all the rest of creation. This difference is in kind and not in degree only, and this makes man the chief glory of the universe and the object of special divine care.

Says John Fiske: "Humanity is not a local accident in an endless series of cosmic changes." Neither is his religion an accident in man's life. There is a divine purpose running through it all. By its guidance and restraints alone shall man reach

the goal of his existence, while without its light in his life his spiritual nature would flower in an arctic night, and he would fall a prey to discouragement and moral apathy.

That men might be free to worship God as they wish and enjoy the benefits of religion has always been cherished as the greatest right, the highest expression of human liberty. In it are found the basis of real personality and the foundation of all righteousness. And rather than be robbed of such a boon, see how men have gone into bitter banishment or died amid the flames at the martyr's stake!

Nor has man's jealousy for his religion been altogether a vain or fruitless affair. Notwithstanding the crimes which have been committed in her name, what agency has been so potent and prolific in guiding the affairs of men and shaping the destiny of nations? It has been the bond of union in perplexing tribal affairs as well as the source of inspiration in statehood's highest achievements. Its instincts have led to man's purest patriotism. Of any people or nation it can be said: "Their God is their glory." What great leaders or people have ever lived who were destitute of religion? From the days of Abraham or Demosthenes down to the present, in a succession rarely broken, they whose names have been honored and whose work has lived have been men who gripped the heart of the people, held their sympathies, and carried them forward by a strong current of religion.

#### MAN INCURABLY RELIGIOUS

Man can no more get away from religion than he can escape from his better self. He may deny that



there is a God, yet he will go on in his profanity taking the name of God in vain. In an hour of revolt he may will to have nothing to do with religion; but *instinct* is greater than will, and religion somehow prevails. One of the Roman emperors spent his life persecuting the Christians, trying to stamp out Christianity, and in his dying moments exclaimed: "Ah, Nazarene, thou art conqueror." Voltaire gave the force of his wit and learning to denying Christianity. His battle cry was, "Crush the Wretch"—meaning Christ. Yet his head was hardly cold till his infidel printing presses were set to printing the Bible. Gibbon was not a believer in Christ, yet in his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," in which he invested twenty of the creamiest years of his life, in his immortal fifteenth chapter, on the influence of Christianity, he unintentionally pays Christianity one of the finest tributes in literature. August Comte spent his life summarizing the frigid lifeless philosophy of Rationalism and filled six heavy volumes with his rationalistic theories. But when he came to write his seventh volume, "Morals," he must needs discover or invent a god—*de Nouveau Etre Supreme*—a deified humanity; and gathering his disciples in Positive Philosophy around him to organize a society, he said: "We shall have nothing to do with priests or the Church." But when his casting came forth, behold it was a system of worship with a "divinity to be adored, to be approached with prayer, worshiped with due rites, and served by numerous priests," of whom he himself was the High Priest.

"Man," says Shelling, "in the very act of organ-



izing society realizes religion; for without religion there can be no society. Religion is at the roots of society and runs through all its laws and customs. Society is only where religion has begun to be." It does not require a miracle to create religion; but it would require a miracle indeed to get rid of it, and thereby denaturalize man. So constantly has the idea of religion been with man that his nature has always been at its best, whether in the individual or nation, where the religious conception has been strongest. This is a fact capable of historical proof—incapable of historical disproof. To the masters, in the days of the glory of Greece and Rome, art was religion. The temple and sculpture which glorified the gods declared the excellence of religion. The medieval cathedrals, dotting middle Europe like stars in the night, were built with as deeply religious fervor as ever burned on the altar of the soul. All pagan literature that has been great has lived because of its religious feature. There is in India a wonderful literature, vast and immense. "It begins," says Dr. A. M. Fairbairn, "with the Rig Veda (sacred hymns) about 1500 B.C. and comes through the great Epics, Law Books, and Philosophers, to the Puranas, almost to our day. But what marks it? Why, religion. Here, as everywhere else, the purer and sublimer the religious ideal, the finer and nobler the literature." The Chinese, also, have a great literature, but it is the exposition of religion as the rules by which they live. The Jews were a great people; though but a handful at home, rude and unlettered in a sense, yet they created what from a literary viewpoint was the most ex-

traordinary literature in the world—namely, the Bible, which is but a history of their religious ideals. What book or what kind of poetry holds our hearts and lives with us to-day? Not books of passion, but such works as Milton and Tennyson, Wordsworth and Browning, which are saturated with religion. These live because they speak for the soul and tell us of God.

“Our country,” says one, “has never profoundly respected any man who was destitute of religion.” Sometimes it occurs that a brilliant scoundrel gets possession of the reins of the government and for a while dazzles the eyes of the people; but who in his quiet moments does not shudder with foreboding lest the nation be heading toward swift destruction? But the men who have been great national leaders and have held the affection and confidence of the people have been men, from Washington to Woodrow Wilson, who were profoundly religious—men of faith and prayer and of high, clean souls.

All such men have unique characteristics. In them is found what Lord Roseberg found in Cromwell, “a practical mystic, a most terrible and formidable combination”—terribly in earnest and most formidable because of an immovable resolution when conscience speaks and duty is known. Such men are regaled by an unseen fountain. They are thrilled by forces which stream into them from the spiritual realm, and are sustained by visions denied the ordinary man. This combination of forces enables them to apply practical skill to the realization of far-off ideals. This they do with an utter unselfish-

ness which reveals elements of true leadership which men readily recognize and freely follow.

Such, indeed, are some of the characteristics of religion when rightly understood and truly lived. It is God's best gift to man, a guiding star in the night of his pilgrimage here, a light which never goes out. There is mystery in it all, a depth which no man can fathom, a something greater than nature. But that mystery fits in perfectly with all the plans of human welfare, making life harmonious and beautiful; while without it life itself would be a purposeless enigma, a problem unsolved. They who have tested their religion in daily living have found it unspeakably precious. They derive from it a strength found nowhere else, and hence do not say and do foolish things under the lash of criticism or the fires of temptation. "They have the witness in themselves" to a truth which to some is foolishness and to others a stumblingblock, but to them that believe it is "the power of God and the wisdom of God," a power which makes for righteousness and in the end everlasting life.

### IS RELIGION NECESSARY?

Notwithstanding all that has been said in religion's favor and the wonderful good it has accomplished in the world, there are those of a skeptical frame of mind who seem honestly to believe that religion is only a kind of fad and not at all necessary. Others there are who go further and say that religion is not only not necessary, but an actual hindrance to mankind. The number who think thus of God's best gift to mankind is surprisingly large. Like

many others of man's great blessings, religion has been shamefully abused at times. Many crimes flow from mistaken religious zeal. Men try to offer substitutes for religion and hold that science and morality would uplift mankind better without it. But this is a fact far from being established. In those countries where science and knowledge have been pushed to their highest along irreligious lines, the reverse is a fact of history. Under such influences men have not only become unprincipled and cruel, but seem to be heading in the direction of the *tiger*, rather than the goal of exalted human life.

While human progress under the influence of religion, with all its inspiration, its quickened conscience, its consolations and restraints, has been slow enough at best, only God in heaven knows where mankind would stand without these salutary influences. The substitution of morality for religion is the shallowest sophistry. At bottom real morality is possible only because of the religious instinct. Out of this same source springs all man's ethical sense, or "oughtness." He feels under obligation to his fellow man only because his Creator has planted within him such an instinct; and man is under obligations to society only because he is under the higher obligation to Almighty God. The two duties are one and the same.

It would be impossible to write a true history of mankind and ignore the supreme power forming his character and shaping his destiny. To think of denying the rich inheritance of religion would be like a banker denying his indebtedness to the accumulated capital in earlier days of the bank's



existence. There is not a lofty ideal in modern civilization which our Saviour did not anticipate and whose seed he did not sow. The altruism of humanity—in fact, the word “humane” itself—did not exist in any language till the idea was inculcated by Christianity.

Religion as an essential in our natures will not down, because a wise Creator has planted it there; and, as Mr. Lecky has said, “We cannot get rid of the fact that it is to religion and its influence that the great force of moral sentiment is due.”<sup>4</sup>

Our Heavenly Father will not leave mankind without the registry of himself and the gracious restraints and consolations of his indwelling Spirit.

A man’s religion is not only the noblest of all his impulses and the dearest of all his possessions, but the greatest of all realities; for does it not bring him to the source of all power back of all force, to the fountain of all truth back of all thought—to God himself, the final reality back of all *verities*. Therefore religion is of necessity the most dynamic of all human forces.

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<sup>4</sup>“History of Rationalism,” by Hurst. (Methodist Book Concern.)



## CHAPTER III

THE COSMIC PRINCIPLE OF LOVE: GOD'S MOTIVE IN  
CREATION AND REDEMPTION

“In the beginning God created.” . . . “God so loved the world.”—*Genesis i. 1; John iii. 16.*

### CHAPTER III

## THE COSMIC PRINCIPLE OF LOVE: GOD'S MOTIVE IN CREATION AND REDEMPTION

RELIGION is God's noblest gift to the soul of man. Its fascinations never wane and its beauties never fade. Its wonders ever unfold to the instinct of sympathetic inquiry, and by no other process can its secrets be truly discovered. In making a study of religion in any of its departments there is but one safe guide, and that is *Realization*. Have it, know its power, realize its benefits; then follow its leadership. Who can explain that which he himself does not know? Yet he may possess that which he cannot explain. He may be the embodiment of life and never know why; or he may have his heart filled to overflowing with the love of God long before he could give to himself, even, an adequate explanation of its origin or its laws. In speaking of the origin of spiritual life, did not our Saviour say: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit"? Yet who that has ever felt the joy of living, or known the thrill of God's gift of new life, but wishes more definite knowledge concerning such blessed experiences?

Is not this insatiate desire to *know more perfectly* the source of all real knowledge the basis of science

and theology? and is it not this impulse that enables man to follow the footprints of the Creator and think his great thoughts after him? Surely it must be pleasing to the Almighty Father to have his earthly children to trace out his doings and rejoice in his ways, else why endow them with the instinct for knowledge, and why such joy in the discovery of each new truth? Eternity alone is the limit set to the joy of him who would seek to know the mysteries of God's infinite love.

Why should it be thought strange for the finite mind to wish to look into the deep things of God? The time has been in the no distant past when such a desire was considered by some sacrilegious, since the finite mind cannot comprehend the infinite. While one may not compass the entire ocean or fathom its depths, yet he can dip up a cupful of its water and have therein all the essentials of the briny deep; just so we may apprehend the goodness of God without comprehending his infinite nature. On this ground it seems legitimate to seek out those principles and know the laws which have to do with the soul's well-being and destiny.

#### GOD'S MOTIVE IN CREATION

May we not with equal propriety seek to discover God's motive in creation and see just why the All-wise Creator saw fit to give us existence and why he so graciously cares for us day after day? Do such secrets lie too deep for human discovery, or are they not rather as an open volume which invites us to read its pages and rejoice in the discovery of its truth? If we approach the subject from the stand-

point of human deductions or attempt to "reason through nature up to nature's God," doubtless such secrets would remain forever among the unsolved problems. Approached thus, great minds have been foiled and the secret of creation remained to them a mystery.

To answer the question of creation in the language of the old catechism and say, "God made all things for his own glory," is but to waive the question and "darken counsel by words without wisdom," since it is no answer at all. In fact, the catechism was essentially wrong, since it reversed the order of the divine thought. Nowhere can there be found a trace of proof that God in all his majestic energies ever turns his attention back upon himself. His thoughts are never introverted, but ever outward and to usward. God is never self-centered and divinely egoistic, but always altruistic and divinely beneficent. Every expression of his majestic mind is in this order, shines forth with this matchless excellence.

Nor can we say that God created all things for the purpose of self-revelation, as some men would have it said, and not go on and say more. This would be but a half truth. Surely we dare not think of God's marvelous creation as merely a spectacular demonstration, or that the Creator had recourse to his wondrous skill in creating only for the gratification of an admiring multitude. Marvelous beauty is everywhere displayed: on the earth, in the air, in the sky; but all this had hardly the dignity of the infinite motive prompting God in all his creative might. Men tell us that all material things are but



the "externality of the thought of God"; that God thought about the "sun," and there it is aglow in the heavens; that he thought "stars," and they came forth to twinkle by the myriads. They tell us that "all nature is but a vast loom whose flying shuttles are ever busy weaving the garments of God."<sup>1</sup> While we thrill over Luther's apostrophe to a rose, "O thou immaculate expression of the mind of God, surpassing in beauty the skill of finest artist's brush," yet we are loath to think that wonder of structure and beauty of blossom were the only purpose of God in creating an apple orchard with its burden of blossoms, or that beauty of face and grace of form constitute the glory of splendid womanhood. Nor need we try to think of God as an infinite Idler—an inert omnipotence without plan or purpose. He is infinite activity, energy, life, freedom! He has always been and shall ever be manifesting himself everywhere. But self-manifestation is the one essential of life—to manifest self is, in fact, self-revelation. But self-revelation is a process, and never till we know the purpose back of it can we discover the motive of God in creation. Did God create the "beauty of the lilies" for his own admiration and delight? Or did he paint the matchless glory of the sunset sky that we might admire it and say, "Behold the glory of the Lord"? God is seen in the sunset, to be sure, but why is he there? Is it as the greatest of all Artists in the portrayal of the beauties of nature? or as infinite Intelligence, "whose ways are past finding out"? What great fact do we gather from the creation of nature, of ourselves, and from

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<sup>1</sup>James Freeman Clarke.

his wonderful Book? Not till these are known can we discover God's purpose in self-revelation or the secret of man's existence and ultimate redemption. Is it not that God, who does all this wonderful self-revelation, is but making known always and everywhere the master passion of his nature—namely, his marvelous, infinite Love?

We are told that "God has not left himself without testimonials in the earth," and that "great thoughts belong to him who can keep them." But who are the keepers of God's great thoughts? His thoughts are best seen when woven into the character of individual man. When this was accomplished in the person of his Son, there was one, the "beloved disciple," who saw it and did not let it slip; and he it was who put the great thought in fittest formula when he tells us that "*God is love.*"

### THE SECRET OF THE UNIVERSE

This one great word *love* tells it all. It was the secret of the universe when God began the work of creation; it is the secret of his present provident administration of affairs; and it is the secret of the unwritten, unfolding future. But for Love's reign and administration what could we expect but "the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds"?

God's essential nature is not expressed by any one of his attributes, such as omnipotence or infinite wisdom. All these attributes God possessed with an added power which controls all. He is primarily, essentially, and preëminently love. His justice, mercy, and truth are but phases of his love in action. His wisdom is omniscient love. His infinite power

is but his love omnipotent. The harmony of his being is due to the submission of his other attribute to his goodness, mercy, and love. This truth must ever be the starting point in all correct conceptions of the divine Nature. All others are essentially wrong and invariably lead to error. Had an illustrious French reformer<sup>2</sup> started with love as a first principle, he could never have reached the desperate conclusions he did. Starting with Omnipotence, or the deification of Will, what wonder he landed in the "eternal decrees," which included the "damnation of infants," which he himself declares "is horrible, but I cannot help it." His logic was without a flaw, but his theology was frightful, all because his starting point was vicious in the extreme. Let the major premise be "God is love," and all notions which militate against this be rejected, then all theological conclusions will be sane, acceptable, beautiful. All else is discordant and leads to error.

### LOVE A COSMIC PRINCIPLE

That we may rejoice the more in the fact that love is a cosmic principle and the secret of the universe, God's motive in creation, let us come to a more direct study of the laws of love as God's master passion. This we may safely do by considering love as we know it to operate in our natures. Love may be defined as that principle by which one being seeks and finds his own highest good in the well-being of another. We have but to consult our own psychic natures to determine what love does—how it urges on to noble self-expression, to creative expansion in unselfish

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<sup>2</sup> John Calvin.

service, and how it yearns for the return of its affection and devotion. Only upon the premise that love, like truth, is the same in all ages and all spheres can we reach any adequate conclusions whatever. Then, by reasoning from the known to the unknown, we may arrive at God's wonderful love. Of course we mean the pure gold of God's affection freed from all sensational dross. Can any more of God's love be revealed than is revealed in our consecrated natures? How else could God reveal his infinite goodness and love? We know of no other vocabulary besides our emotions by which to tell the wonderful story of the goodness of God.

### *1. An Active Principle*

Love as we know it is an active principle—not a dead fossil, but a living power. If this be true in our limited human realm, it must be so in God's unlimited and perfect state. In man love may lie dormant, waiting for wooing to call it into active being—since man is an incomplete, unfolding being; but not so with him whose love was ever complete and whose powers were always active and never needed calling forth. This gracious faculty in God has always been an active emotion, and never a potential possibility only. Such is God's love, an infinitely perfect emotion reigning in the great fatherly heart of God, a faint semblance of which we find in our own hearts.

With this fact in mind, as the first law of love as we know it, let us see its application to the nature of God. Do we find its principle in force there? As a Being actuated by love, has God always been and



shall he ever be an active power? Imagine, if we can, God in the beginning, antedating all creation, seated upon his throne in the center of a vast, unpeopled universe, with his beams of infinite affection streaming out in all directions—in his very essence he must love—with never an object upon whom to lavish his gracious emotion! Behold him thus from all eternity alone, the loneliest Being imaginable, while the fragrance of his great heart radiates in useless energy throughout empty space with none to enjoy its bliss! The very idea is next to the unthinkable. It is unlike God.

Here we discover God's incentive and motive in creation. The very nature of God required—nay, demanded—the whole of creation in order that he might have whereon to bestow his heart's affection. From all eternity, therefore, God must have been creating; and since he is a Being who changes not, to all eternity he must continue his benevolent work. To this good day we see that his creative energies have not rested. "My Father worketh hitherto," said our gracious Lord, "and I work." Every vital germ, every unfolding flower, every newborn life and noblest expression of mind and soul—all living, growing, expanding things but attest this wonderful truth. A finished creation and crystallized world with an exhausted love and defunct Providence would be the greatest calamity imaginable. Were this the condition of our present world the only path left us would be to adjust ourselves to the grim fatality and fixed misfortune and let the human race die out. Such a state would be the deathblow to faith, and life would become a dread nightmare.



But a world in which God is still at work—a world still becoming, an unfinished universe—is God's opportunity, furnishing him a field for the further manifestation of his infinite goodness and love. Such a world as this is the workshop of God, the hope of humanity, and the ground principle of all our Christian religion. Where shall we set the limit of God's creative energy? Shall suns and systems tell the wondrous story? In God's vast domains our universe is but a paltry handful on the horizon of that realm where God's love ever holds undisputed sway. It is taught in the Vedanta that "God in creation is ever renewing his ancient rapture." Nor was it by mere accident or without purpose said of old that "God is love," since love alone is creative, dynamic, vital, and, in its very nature, rapturous in self-expression.

## *2. A Beneficent Principle*

While God's love is ever an active principle, never inert, but always busily producing the objectives of the divine affection, it is vastly more than an indiscriminate source. It is this plus a social beneficent element. All love is altruistic. Only lust is entirely selfish. "In its cosmic principle love is an infinite open circle in which the currents go outward in self-expression and creative energy only to return in grateful yielding affection and devotion." While love must create that it may enrich and continue to bless, the reciprocal principle of love requires the responsive object; so God must create recipient creatures. "Love without affinities must die," and the nature of God required something

higher than lifeless, inanimate objects as the recipients of his warmth of affection. God's creative skill is wonderfully manifest in the beauty of the lilies, in the fire-glow of a polished diamond or the sunset sky; but the divine heart could no more be satisfied with lavishing love on these inanimate objects than the heart of an intelligent woman could be satisfied with bestowing her affection upon a magnificent doll.

The Heavenly Father must have fellowship with his earthly children and thereby realize spiritual affinity. The fact of being infinitely perfect does not shut God out from fellowship with his imperfect, finite creatures any more than being a man shuts one out from fondness for the creatures below him. Therefore for the satisfaction of his own nature God created living, sentient personalities—spiritual beings like himself—endowed with the noble faculties of intelligence and religion, capable of reciprocating in some measure the gift of God's love. Thus it was that in the morning of creation, when seeking a model for the fashioning of man's personality so as to meet the cravings of his own nature, he said, "Let us make man in our own image"—and nothing short of this would have met the requirements of the divine heart. To be a fit recipient of such affection man must be in a measure akin to God. This is God's doing, though marvelous in our eyes.

But man as an integral part of this love-born universe must be more than a splendid recipient of the divine affection. Even God himself could not be satisfied with simply bestowing, enriching, surfeiting. Love bestowed asks for love in return. God

requires the living warmth of a responsive soul, and it is when this response is truly and deeply given that man rises to his highest estate in religious attainment. In accomplishing this interrelation God himself takes the initiative. He does not wait till man has learned how to love him and show himself worthy before God's goodness is bestowed. "He sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust." It was not man's accomplished excellence that called forth God's love for a lost world. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." A mother waits not for the development of worth or beauty in her babe, but lavishes the richness of her fountain of love upon her helpless infant. So also with God. Love seeks the first avenue of expression and flows freely toward the object claiming its care. It is love's prerogative, divine and beautiful, to give that it may awaken a like passion latent in the soul, striving to awaken in the soul a holy zeal and through this fan to a flame the fires of everlasting life.

As a social principle, love ever seeks to identify itself in blessed companionship with the object of its care. Who that truly loves can remain aloof from and above all relations with the beloved. Love must ever condescend to the level of the object of affection or lift that object up to its own plane. This our Heavenly Father has so divinely done and will continue to do till the end. As Moses patiently bore with the Israelites in the desert wanderings, "bearing them in his bosom like a nursing mother," that he might bring them to the land of promise, so God has condescended to be patient with erring mortals. In thousands of ways unseen his love has

emerged, as he has come into human life to guide and uphold and to save. Herein was manifest the mind of God "in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant; and was made in the likeness of men: . . . and became obedient unto death,"<sup>3</sup> that he might reveal God and redeem sinful man. By coming into intimate relations with man, God has revealed the mystery of suffering Love. But some will ask: "How can a perfect Being suffer?"

### *3. Perfect Love Suffers*

Just here let us pause for a moment. The human mind cannot adequately conceive of an abstract Essence diffused throughout space. An impersonal abstract Deity vanishes from the mental grasp. For God to be intelligently thought of, he must step out into the open, out of the abstract into the concrete. Here he can be thought of as in action—creating, upholding, governing, loving, sympathizing, and suffering. These activities all bring God into the range of human thought.

So we ask, How can a perfect personal God exist without loving, and how can he love without sympathizing, which means "suffering together"? Ask a mother why she suffers with her wayward son, and she has but one answer: "Why, I am his mother." Her mother love expresses itself in her solicitude, anguish, suffering. "Love would cease to be love if it should lose its powers of suffering." The deeper

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<sup>3</sup>Philippians ii. 5-8.



the love and more refined the nature, the greater the capacity of sympathy and the deeper its pangs of suffering. Where there is dull indifference to joy or sorrow there cannot be true affection. How could the Heavenly Father be himself and not enter into sympathy with us and suffer for us? As Principal Fairbairn has well said: "An infinitely holy being can be an infinitely happy being where all besides are holy." God must therefore suffer so long as any besides are evil. Love and suffering can never be divorced. One cannot exist without the other. If it be asked why the just must suffer for the unjust, the innocent for the guilty, the divine for the human, there is but one answer: "It is the way of love"; or, better still, "It is God's way." Then again, while we may never fathom the depth of the mystery of all this, what consolation there is in the fact that God's love reaches to the depth of our suffering, and by his sympathizing love makes lighter all the burdens we bear! What balm is so sweet to aching hearts as the sympathy of love, and what sympathy is so profound as God's?

#### *4. Love Must Also Serve*

Love not only suffers with the object of affection; it must also serve. There can be no love without service, or service without love. Slavery, repulsive and killing, must ensue if there is enforced obedience where love is not. No soul is in its rightful realm till it has found means of self-expression in glad, loving service. Here are its chief charm and purest joy. God the perfect being, infinite in resources, could not be content without some method of putting himself at the command of his needy mundane chil-



dren. Did he not create us of his own accord that he might out of the fullness of his bounty administer to our every need? There is no fact more evident than this. Of the divine care in loving service to man all nature stands in ready proof. Look where we will, we cannot but observe its manifestation. The shining sun pours down its light beams that it may awaken the life forces in earth's bosom and call them forth to joyous service. Every blossom that blooms is a message of God's good will to men told in the language of fragrance and beauty and is a promise of a richer bounty. Every harvest season yields its increase as an evidence of God's goodness and love, awakening "the sweet strains of the corn reapers' song." Every kindness man shows his fellow man is but an expression of that love of God which is ever struggling to utter itself in blessing and giving itself to every one for whom God cares.

In no way is the divine service more evident than in the provident care and oversight manifested in the ordinary sequences of life. There is no portion of God's universe where this care is not rife and none too humble to escape his watchful eye. The celestial spheres which sweep through space in majestic world colonies are no more the objects of his intelligent care than is the smallest germ that floats unseen in a drop of dew. Throughout God's vast domain is spread out the ample canopy of his loving administration with an energy as fresh and unwasting as if upon the morning of creation. What fact has greater consolation for the troubled heart? Every breath he breathes and every heart throb is by an energy of the love of God. Whether he walks

by day or sleeps at night God's bivouac never fails; and what he is doing for one he is doing for all his children in all his dominion. No one can reasonably doubt that the world is replete with the evidence of God's loving care for man. All nature is fruitful of his benefits. He has made all nature musical to the ear and beautiful to the eye. Instead of burdening us with want, he has surfeited us with plenty. The full tide of his universal goodness flows within and around us on every side. In its eternal rounds it touches all things with its power. We live and move and have our being in the bountiful goodness of God. His gracious presence attends our steps and consoles our hearts. He hears the prayers of every soul.

An "absentee divinity," far removed from the sphere of human life and deaf to the heart's cry, is not the God that mortals need and never will satisfy the cravings of the soul. It does not suit the mind of the age, and is not the kind of a God revealed in the Bible. The God of the Scriptures is the immanent Being, identifying himself with the world's struggles and hopes, bearing our infirmities and feeling our sufferings as only love can. In the far-distant past God's inspired seers beheld in their vision One, the fairest among ten thousand, whom they designated as "God's suffering servant." In the Gospels we find him portrayed at full length in all his excellence and grace saying, "I am among you as he that serveth"; and in so saying he makes known the eternal principle of love, which in the nature of God must have made itself known. "Love necessarily impels to service, while service deepens and intensi-

fies love. Service, therefore, is a condition of perpetual revelation."

### 5. *Love's Final Triumph, Self-Giving*

God's plans are ever unfolding toward a final triumph. While constantly serving the needy race, the blessed Creator has not only been bestowing his matchless favors, but has at the same time been moving steadily forward to the culmination of an ultimate purpose—namely, the triumph of his infinite love in *complete self-giving*. Genuine love can never be satisfied short of the complete gift of self. Love must give—must give grandly, must give all. It has always done thus. Hence the infinite love of God could not stop till the supreme sacrifice has been made. This as the law of love is manifestly cosmic, not only reaching down into the realm of finite human affairs and reigning there, but it sweeps up into the abode of the Eternal and takes in the infinite love of God. The gift of self to the utmost possibility is the very soul of perfect love. All true sacrifice is made plain here, as well as all real greatness of soul and life. The patriot finds his path to glory and to the hearts of his people only as he surrenders himself unreservedly to the call of his country. The mother is never more divine than when, in total self-forgetfulness, she immolates herself upon the altar of service for those she loves; nor is the father ever more noble and supreme than when enshrined in the hearts of them that are his, and garlanded by those for whom he would gladly lay down his life. This same principle wrought out to its fullness opens up to men the noblest vistas of

truth and illumines also many of life's darkest problems, as well as reveals the wonderful heart of God. Herein is discovered that impulse of the divine Self which found expression in that undying sentence: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In all its majestic beauty God's love could not have been satisfied short of the supreme gift; otherwise it would have failed in the hour of trial and missed the ultimate triumph of its own purpose. Up to this crisis of imparting the very best in the divine nature to a lost and ruined world, all the processes of revelation have pointed since the world began; and to that one fact all the wonders of human redemption have slowly but surely tended through the ages and came to flower and final triumph at Gethsemane. The cross is the secret of all God's culminating purposes and the highest unfolding of infinite love. Toward this one event all prophetic truth converged, and from it all light radiates. This is that "far-off divine event to which the whole creation moved." There could be no other—the efflorescence of the majestic love of the Father and the completion of that redemptive plan which had been inwrought in the very nature of God from the beginning. In that crucial hour, the darkest that ever dawned, the beams of eternal light burst from the dungeon of night and flooded the world with morning forever! Nor shall its glory ever wane. Then it was that incarnate Love, mightier than all opposing powers, surmounting all difficulties and, struggling through the darkness, placed upon the



altar of eternity the incomparable sacrifice, the unspeakable Gift! Here was the supreme triumph of love in sacrificing the divine best for fallen man!

To the great expounder of the faith, the apostle Paul, this was the climax of all revelation, the sure evidence of the unfailing love of God. Said he: "If God spared not his only Son, but offered him up for us all, will he not with him *freely give us all things?*" Having made the greatest gift, God could not withhold the lesser. God's doings are himself expressed; and he must ever be true to himself. To have wavered or failed in the eternal proffer of grace would have been to abandon the very first principles of his own being. It was infinite love that gripped the heart of the Son of God and "constrained" him to utmost obedience to the Father's will. "My meat and my drink," he said, "is to do the will of him that sent me." That "will" bore him on to the offering of himself in obedience to that cosmic principle of love which refuses to be content short of the utmost that love can give. When has there been conceived a sublimer plan for setting forth the infinite love of God?—bodying it forth in the form of divine Personality. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Anything short of this would not have been a true revelation or have demonstrated God's absolute fidelity to the principles of his nature. This was God's sublime triumph of self-giving in love. Beyond this omnipotence cannot go. To have done less would have been unlike God; to have done more were an impossibility.

All the marvels of God's revelation of himself



find expression just here. It was all love's tender enactment—love the fountainhead of mercy, the essence of truth, and the soul of righteousness. This vitalizing, sympathizing, suffering, and serving love of God has been supreme in the doings of Jehovah in all ages. It has lived and breathed in the Father's heart from all eternity; hence "Christ must have come into the world as the revealer of the divine love, even though sin had never entered to separate man from his Maker."<sup>4</sup>

Such is the stream of love flowing from the infinite heart of God. With this light in the heavens to make our path plain and beautify life forever, may we not go forth rejoicing to study her mysteries and discover her laws to obey them? With this light we proceed with our further studies of the realities of the Christian religion.

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<sup>4</sup> "Epistles of St. John," by Westcott. (Macmillan Co.)



## CHAPTER IV

GOD'S WORLD PLAN AS REVEALED BY OUR LORD  
JESUS CHRIST

“A belief that a divine power governs the universe, that all miscellaneous and unexplicable happenings will be gathered up into a smooth and ultimate perfection, gives faith, comfort, and consolation. . . . On a large scale, from a cosmic rather than from a personal point of view, an individual who is gifted in a large and charitable faith in the future of mankind, is secured and sustained by the feeling that he is a part of that procession which is headed toward ‘that far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves.’”—“*Human Traits*,”  
*Irwin Edman.*

## CHAPTER IV

### GOD'S WORLD PLAN AS REVEALED BY OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

MAN'S best interests and highest achievements are always to be found when in harmony with the realm in which he lives. To toil on clashing with the laws of the universe would be unwise. So it behooves us to learn the condition under which we are to live.

Has God a definite world plan? Did he in the beginning think things through and adopt a scheme by which he made all things and still governs the universe? Now, it can plainly be seen that he did establish such a system in the material world, discovered by the study of science and known as "the laws of nature." But is there such a plan in the moral world as it has to do with man? To say that there is not would be to leave the issues of life to the caprices of chance.

If God has a world plan, what is its nature? Does it make for the triumph of right and truth, or does it leave the issues of life entirely uncertain? Various opinions are held touching this momentous question. Some are hopeless enough to think that the future is altogether dark and only grim disaster awaits, while others with equal tenacity hold to a more optimistic view. Others still contend that since it is man's prerogative to choose good or evil, thus determining his own life, the character of the future is altogether uncertain. Besides this, there



are good and pious people who believe that the world has been bad from the beginning and is likely so to continue to the end. They believe that, since the present life is evil, it is the highest duty of a Christian to hold himself aloof from the world, and that "the happiest day of a man's life is the day of his death." This ascetic idea of life is back of all monastic institutions; but is it Christian?

At this stage of modern life, which many liken to "a carnival of crime," some serious people are asking: "Is life, with all its burdens of care and its uncertainties, worth the living?" Others are asking: "What has gone wrong with the world? Has God forgotten us? If so, what is to become of the world?" There are others who take the gloomiest possible view of the world's future. They believe evil to be in the ascendancy, and that it has always been so; that there can be no ultimate hope for humanity. Nothing could be more gloomy than the picture of the universe as modern materialism presents it, Bertrand Russell being witness. "Purposeless and void of meaning," he says, "is the world which science reveals for our belief. . . . That man is a product of causes which have no prevision of the ends they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought or feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all devotion, all aspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and the whole temple of man's achieve-

ments must inevitably be buried beneath the débris of universal ruin. All this, if not quite beyond dispute, is yet so nearly certain that no philosopher who rejects it can hope to stand." To such a soulless science the present world is a "colossal Sodom and Gomorrah, where a foul egoism ever breeds the speedier woe and disaster, and the fire and brimstone which swept the cities of the plains from the earth are to be regarded as angels of mercy and types of the whirlwind which shall roll all human distresses into the peace of extinction."

This may be considered as the very worst possible view of life. If this be true, we may wonder if this life were not a kind of "Limbo" imposed upon us for some mysterious reason, if not a drama enacted for the delight of some fiend of deity. Even if we personally, largely through accident of circumstances, happen to be successful, "our joy is a vulgar glee, not unlike the snicker of any rogue at his success." Unless against this dark view of life some reassuring faith arise, life would become unbearable. In extreme cases it has driven men to suicide.

While the average man may not accept the optimist's conception of life, that this is the very best possible world, and while realizing that much in the world is going wrong, yet "he does feel vaguely assured that the nature of things is ordered, harmonious, dependable, and regular, and affairs, cosmically considered, are in a sound state. He feels a vast and comfortable solidity about the whole of things in which his life is set. He can depend upon the familiar rising and setting of the sun, the recurrent and assured movements of the seasons. Were this trust

suddenly removed, were the cosmic guarantee withdrawn, to live would be one prolonged terror." It is what follows when men reach such gloomy conclusions that is of interest to the religious or scientific world. When men settle down to systematic pessimism socially and commercially, what wonder that the world is caught in a vast crime wave? "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," and out of this fountain flows the life he may live.

### THE EGOIST'S WORLD

But what of that popular theory which holds that life at present is bad; that it originated in the jungle and is a struggle between individuals; that there is an invisible force at work in the world forcing mankind onward into a far-distant, better state where life will be worth living? Now, the only difference between this and the pessimist's bad world lies in the optimistic guess as to what the future will bring forth. In both the present seems bad enough. When brought to a norm the teachings of the evolutionist can be expressed in these words: "Realize thyself"—do your best, worst, reach your goal, whatever that may be. Here we find the embodiment of the egoist, the most dissatisfied, if not the most wretched, person in the world; and he concludes that life is all misery. This seems to be the normal condition of the person of the world who lives for self only. Unfortunately this state of discontent seems to be the natural product of our non-Christian democracies, which exalt the individual self and enthrone the will. This brings on a deadly clash of kindred spirits and arrays strength against strength, making

it possible for the strong to trample down the weak, producing exactly the jungle condition where reigns the "red law of tooth and claw"—which is seen modernized in competitive commerce. This spirit is as old as human selfishness and greed. It sends the helpless to the bottom of the sea, sees millions die of starvation, while the poor are crushed by merciless money trusts. It calls all such "the useless element of society," the overproduct of "rampant animalism." To the egoist success is the mastery in life's bitter struggle for existence. Thus the "fittest" is always the strongest, the most cunning or daring and unprincipled. To them alone they count life worth living, but to the rest life is a calamity; and to be dead is to be out of the way of the strong. The law of the "survival of the fittest" may pertain in the realm of plants and brutes, and some men want to apply it to human life. But is this *law of the savage and the brute* God's world plan as taught us by Jesus Christ?

### THE TWO LAWS OF NATURE

The modern man, as he is pleased to be called, must have discovered that while "the laws of nature are the laws of God" there is more than one set of the laws of nature. In his scientific studies he must have discovered that God has a code of laws applicable to the material realm and are seen at work in the forces of nature such as electricity, gravitation, and in chemical action. But God has also another set of laws, which apply only to the moral realm and social life of man. In the one set of laws is seen the law of *force* as applied to inanimate and unmoral



objects; while in the other is seen the law of *love* as applied to personality. God does not govern the moral world by material laws. God is the "absolute habit of love," while man is the creature of that law, and all his life comes under its dominion. Love brought man into existence; it awakens his powers; it conserves his interests and points the way to his highest achievements. It lifts him above brute-hood; it pushes the soul into prominence and accentuates the moral worth of man.

That the strong should help the weak is an epitome of the world plan of God in dealing with man. With God this is a law. It was this law in the nature of God that caused him to reveal himself, to come into actual fellowship with man, as set forth in the Gospels, in the life of our Lord, and in the teachings of the apostles. This law of love stands as a supreme protest against the harsh theory of the "survival of the fittest" when applied to human nature. While the scientist must look *down* to the material realm for instances in proof of his brutal theory, *love looks up to Christ* as an example of the "more excellent way." Christ's labors were never egoistic, never put forth in trampling down others and triumphing over them; but they were always in behalf of the weak and needy—in divine solicitude for others. The cross stands as a symbol of love's supreme gift, and in direct antagonism to the ethics of the jungle, glorified in international strife and militarism.

#### CHRIST CONFIDENT HERE

In nothing was Christ more confident than in the ultimate triumph of God's world plan as set forth



by himself. He came to earth to reveal this plan. Said he: "I speak not of myself. . . . My meat and my drink is to do the will of him that sent me." "Thy will be done" was his supreme declaration.

This sublime confidence of success rested upon three basal facts: (1) He recognized the will of God in all the sequences of life. He believed that there was a purpose at the heart of the universe, working slowly, constantly, and persistently to one great end. But this *will* with him was not a blind force, titanic and unmoral and cruel in the extreme, but the expression of the energy of love. This thought came beautifully to florescence in the saying, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work"—said in connection with his Sabbath works of mercy. All the future lay in the will of the Father and could be only bright. (2) He also believed in man, and upon this faith his confidence further emerges. He was interested and invested himself in humanity as a whole, and not in one class of men as arrayed against another. Out of this humanity, including the downtrodden and the despised "publicans," his kingdom was to be built, rich in possibilities to glorify God. The unsaved were not outcasts to be shunned, but were "lost sheep," straying children to be sought and kissed back into the father's embrace. With social customs all against him, Jesus treated men as the sons of God, and his confidence reached the lowest in unholy living. He saw in them the submerged image of God. To this he appealed, and in the outcome of such men in all ages his wisdom finds ample justification. Who besides him has thus viewed and treated men and so bene-

fited them? The miracle of this confidence has never ceased. His confiding love still makes bad men good. He believed in and trusted men, and to this day they prove true to him and will die for him and his cause. (3) The third basis of Jesus's confidence of triumph was his ideal of life. With him life was not simply meat and drink: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he hath." Beneath the wreckage and ruin of every life there is a real self to which, forsooth, he may be awakened. He did not ignore the black shadow of sin, nor yield to the gloomy pessimism of his day; but he illumined the darkness of humanity with the light of a divine purpose, and thus made the evidence of despair to become the element of hope. "Offenses must come." Life must have its conflicts, its trials and temptations, or victory were not possible. His death must needs be. "It is expedient for you that I go away"—without it redemption could not be achieved. He did not regard man as the sport of fate, but the object of divine love. The very power which constrained him to the death on the cross holds all true souls firm to life's duties. The way to the cross was the path to the higher life, the perfection of being. Out of the "baptism of fire" would come the transfiguration of soul. The Sermon on the Mount is the measure of Jesus's conception of God's world plan, and in its gradual fulfillment his justification is yet being accomplished.

#### SELF-GIVING IN LOVE

The grace of self-giving is not only the highest moral act of God, but is the very soul of his plans as

revealed in Christ. This self-renunciation does not mean suicide, but rather the redemption and uplift of mankind. On this platform Christ would attempt a conquest of the world, and only in the light of this principle can we interpret his religion—a religion of love and service into which he calls all men to enlist.

Sacrifice at its best is the supreme act of love—and this in self-giving for the good of others. It is God manifesting the purest principle of his nature. All the world is full of the manifestation of this law. Its way is the path of service. Minerals must disintegrate and lose their identity to be taken up and become food for plants. In their turn plants are crushed and dissolved, to be taken up by animal life. Again animal life must yield and become food for man, thus becoming a stimulus for the spiritual life.

Now all this, from the standpoint of unthinking selfishness, may seem a manifestation of nature's cruelty and may appear like one degree of life preying upon another; but only one link of the chain is seen at a time. For this subservient purpose all degrees of life were created, and by this self-abnegation their destiny is fulfilled. But for this same self-giving how could material substances ever be woven into the matchless beauty of blossom or the wealth of fruitage? How could plant and animal life ever reach the high dignity of serving human life and become the setting for sparkling thought and immortal spirit? Man in his order, also in harmony with creation's plans, must forego self and ease and consent to "become a sacrifice for others" to ac-

comply with his destiny in life. He, too, must surrender his hold upon the lower degree of life in order to become honored and glorified in the more exalted kingdom. This is the philosophy of our Saviour's teachings when he said: "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." This paradox is the very gateway to eternal life.

#### WHERE ETERNAL CROWNS ARE WON

Nowhere in the study of our Lord's teachings do we discover that, in offering his disciples eternal life, he ever promised them exemption from hardships, trials, and temptations. Nor do any of his apostles promise such exemption. The Lord taught his disciples to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"; but this prayer was neither an implication that God would foolishly lead us into temptation or that he could be induced to lift mankind above all such trying ordeals and thereby out of all responsibility. This great prayer was a petition for divine tuition and guidance for the soul in its sovereignty. It was a prayer that the soul might prefer the more excellent way, might avoid all impurity and maintain that frame of mind which abhors the evil and cleaves to the good. While it is not in keeping with God's plans to exempt mankind from all trial tests, it is the glory of man to steer clear of disaster and avoid all disgrace. To develop an instinct for the detection of evil, and to shun it, is the finest shade of Christian character. Our place is in a world fraught with evil. Here our Father has allotted us to be born; here man is expected to win his glory; and our re-



deeming Lord would not take us out of such a world. In his famous prayer for his disciples he said: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one"<sup>1</sup>—from being overcome by him. To be in a world where evil exists is one thing; but to be overcome by it is quite another. To wage a constant warfare against sin is heroic, is Christlike. Such a world is the arena of victory; here eternal crowns are won! To equip a soul for such a strife, to make it sin-proof, with tastes for good and a will to do right at all hazards—this is to make it godlike, is what Christianity means to accomplish in her schools for sainthood.

Our Lord dealt with this question in a way that would clearly indicate that such a world condition is in exact keeping with the divine world plan. He who came to reveal God's will did not himself condemn it or seek to escape it, as did the medieval monks. It has always been true that in the conflicts of life, in great tribulations, the noblest characters have been developed. In all human life we develop strength by exercise and greatness in strife. But for the Egyptian captivity and the forty years in the wilderness, the world would not have had a Moses, civilization's greatest emancipator and law-giver. Without such conflicts history would have been without a Pericles or a Charlemagne, a Cromwell or a Washington, a Foch or a Woodrow Wilson. But for the trials which fretted the souls of our mothers and tried their patience we could never have known those beautiful shades of excellence which

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<sup>1</sup>John xvii. 15.



glow like diamonds in their character. Without this conflict there could be no probation, no joy of being right, no glory of a final triumph. Such a world is God's training ground for souls where sovereignty of soul is developed and immortal heroes are made, fashioned after the image of God. Think of Thomas A. Edison experimenting with eighteen hundred different chemicals in developing his X-ray photography! Or of an author like Gibbon spending twenty years of the cream of his life in writing one history, "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"! Is there any wonder that it lives? Just this patient struggling against difficulties brings out those characters which are the glory of any country, and with whom even God himself might be pleased—for do they not think his great thoughts after him and make them glow for the rest of mankind? Triumphant in this age-long struggle lets the world grow better and our age to eclipse all others and our approach to personality to be the trophy of our times. Thus it is that

"through the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the  
suns."

All this is accomplished not without man's co-operation, but with it and through his agency. Some may have thought otherwise; but fatalism accomplishes nothing in the moral and religious life of man. He has his struggles and triumphs because he has a will to obey and trust to the grace of a higher power.

This conflict between good and evil is not a limited something to be experienced and be rid of; but must

be fought to a finish either by the unaided powers of human will or by the assistance of divine help. Men and nations have attempted the conquest by various methods. The melancholy story of man's unaided efforts to resist the impulses of evil is as widely known as the existence of evil itself. The record is the same whether written upon the cave temples of India, or in the marble poetry of Greece, or in the splendid ruins of world-conquering Rome, or in the wild leap into the dark unknown by men who seek to escape from the "demon thought" by suicide. Everywhere and in all languages the verdict is the same in the struggle for mastery over evil by human strength alone. It is always, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity."

By the Christian, however, the conflict is waged under a sky radiant with hope. "He sees the victory from afar; by faith he brings it nigh." Well he knows that he cannot win the victory except by the aid of proffered grace. With this his triumph is sure. It is this "hope set before" in all God's world plans that buoys the soul and conquers sorrow—"gives even affliction a grace and reconciles man to his lot." Jacob's fourteen years of bond service were to him but as a few days, considering the love he bore for his beloved Rachel. It is the end sought that robs life's burdens of their weight and gives sacrifice its halo of glory. When the love of God is warm in the heart, then his will is a pleasure and service a delight. Thus it is that love illumines sorrow and makes even suffering blessed. The promise of greater things is written across the face of disaster, and no amount of evil prophecy or weapons of destruction can finally

defeat life's ends if they are in harmony with God's great world plans at work in every soul coöperating with God. The career of Jesus, who refused the lure of wealth, fame, and a crown, led at last to the cross, it is true; but that career illumined the pathway of life with a light which has never gone out and culminated in the resurrection and the redemption of the race. Had there been no night in his life, there could have been no glorious dawn. With no "becoming as a servant and obedient unto death," there had been no crowning and seating at the right hand of the Father.

#### THE JUDICIAL PROCESS

Since this conflict means a final triumph for the soul or for the world, there must be room for the severest judicial action with full coöperation of the soul and the nation. Flowery beds of ease have never yet carried one to the skies. The judicial process is at the heart of all human life. To exact obedience and award the worthy is but the utmost kindness—"the austere benignity of the moral order." In the midst of it all there must be the process of illumination. Moral excellence is never self-sustaining. The conscience needs instruction; otherwise its verdicts would often be mere traditions or prejudices, if not rankest bigotry. The overthrow of ignorance will require effort and unfailing vigilance.

Into the realm of light, love, and truth for the noble mastery of life's problems, men are led, are wooed, and are driven. This "double inducement," punishment and reward, is present in every crisis

of life. Of old it was said: "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey; . . . a curse, if you will not obey."<sup>2</sup> This is the ancient law, as old as the moral nature of man—truth and error, right and wrong, meeting in life-and-death conflict.

This life is God's arena for moral triumph, and the war is ever on. All history is but an epic of the heroic conflict. In the past it was, Shall Sparta or Athens go down, Carthage or Rome, the old Empire or the new prophetic nations that shall swarm in upon it? Shall it be the French or the English who shall possess the new America? Shall the Kaiser or the Spirit of Liberty control the destiny of nations? To-day it is, Shall it be Christ or Belial, the Spirit or the brute, that shall fling out the flag of the future, the soul or Satan, to perish or to live forever?

Such is the spirit which is ever sounding the tocsin, calling to the conflict true souls upon whom hang the destinies of men and nations—men whom the world is waiting to crown with its laurels. Shall we of to-day, under the spell of Taoism, lie prone in lethargy and wait for Nature to accomplish it all; or hark the call of Christ, the call of God from eternity, and leap to the conflict and win the victory for truth and native land? This call of God is in every holy impulse, every high and noble aspiration, every verdict for the right; and nothing contributes more to the enlargement of individual life than a heroic and cheerful response to this call. God's hosts for the right are an army of volunteers, and they know true bravery.

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<sup>2</sup>Deuteronomy xi. 26-28.



## BUILDING PERSONALITY

In this *tribulation*<sup>3</sup> of life, with its sufferings and victories, it is not the design of the Father to suppress personality, but to unfold and build it up and perfect it. While we are "called to be conformed to the image of his Son," thereby being in harmony with the divine plan, even this is not intended to blot out our wills or suppress our personality. Even if it were possible in the lifelong struggle of bringing our wills into harmony with the divine will to school the soul into silent subjection and eternal passivity to the will of God, even this would answer none of the designs of God in our spiritual education in the school of Christ. Nor is it perfection to be absorbed into the infinite Brahma, lost in Infinite Bliss, or schooled into harmless dullness or eternal inefficiency. The purpose of an educational institution with its classroom work and its field athletics is no more intended to develop the physical and mental powers of the student than it is the design of the Creator, by this school of adversity, to build up personality by awakening the intellect, stimulating the sensibilities and conscience, and establishing the sovereignty of the will—all of which combine to clothe man with the nobility of existence. Instead of reducing and destroying our native wholeness, the design of the Heavenly Father is to fill it out, to complete and glorify it. After raising man up out of sin, which is always a grievous burden, God sets him on a higher plane of choice and liberty where will is in harmony with reason, there to be empowered as sons and coworkers with himself in vast world enterprises, as

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<sup>3</sup>*Tribulum*, to separate the wheat from the chaff.



through us as willing instruments he accomplishes his majestic schemes in human redemption and world progress.

The supreme task in the building up of personality is to bring mankind to the highest plane of living—to the development of spirituality and full soul harmony with God, to “the perfect manhood in Christ Jesus.” This we know can be accomplished in a variety of ways; so that while men are created with the widest possibility of individuality, this godlikeness may be attained in them each without harming their personality. God suits his methods to the needs of each. What would aid the learned might be useless to the unlearned, and “trials” to the poor would be of no avail to the rich. Yet they are in the hands of the same eternal, man-educating, soul-redeeming, and loving Heavenly Father. The paramount duty of each is, therefore, to strive to bring himself and help to bring all others into the likeness of God and into glad harmony with him. The highest attainment in holiness of life is to realize this finished personality. When this has been accomplished man has a mind that can apprehend and seize the thoughts of God and send them broadcast to the enriching of the world’s thought; he has a will that responds to the divine will in the sovereignty of its choice; and he has a conscience which reflects the rectitude of the divine nature in all moral relations and keeps pure the stream of love flowing fresh from the fountain of the heart. But what is all this but to have the Soul enthroned?

The highest gladness is reached by man when he finds his will merged into the righteous, loving will

of God; and when, also, without hesitation, his own spirit responds joyfully to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. This, indeed, is all God's planning as seen in Christ Jesus; and in this great scheme God would include the whole world.

The joy of the Christian life is in large measure the sense of personal enlargement found in a plan which comprehends the whole world. He who has found the harmony of such a plan is surprised at the breadth of his being. He has not lost himself in the vastness of life, but has found himself, and in reality only begun to live. What a wonderful new sense of freedom there is in this fullness, this living life and deep confidence of power! The great surprise is that God could make so much out of materials so ordinary. The greatest outcome of our struggles will be with us as it was with Jacob—namely, the development of power by which we prevail with God and with men. It is the relation of all true saints that they have a princely rank. "God is never jealous of the power of his people. He lets them come and wrestle that they may be strong. He calls such into the gate that they may be intercessors for him as tried and true leaders of the people."

Just this is the character that is needed for to-day. For such a type the world is waiting to make our troubled age the greatest era in the world's history. But, before God can accomplish the designs in his world plan in us, the clamor for exemption from trials and hardships must give place to a heroic life of faith and enlarged Christian personality. "God is ever watching the process with us, and varying the discipline best to mold us unto himself, that

nothing be lacking to the completeness of the happy result of the trial. So if we complain of the temptations of life, charging our failures to the severity of the trials, then how clear it is that character can be fortified and finished in us only by such trials."<sup>4</sup> Is not a soul on trial for the perfection of character in reality a candidate for heavier trials? No temptations are ever too great, unless we make them so by yielding when we should have resisted unto victory.

In all this moral conflict the warrior needs not battle alone. His Captain is ever at his side; and in all the campaigns of life they go together. Wandering perplexed in the wilderness of ideas and passions, this Champion will ever appear, and in the depths of the labyrinth his glance will indicate the way. In all the grievous sacrifices of life the warrior not only has the companionship of his Lord, but his example as well. We have a great Saviour because he endured great hardships and resisted great temptations. The trials of life are but great battle fields; and just here it is that God honors us by calling us to be heroes and by waiting to crown us victors.

### THE INDIVIDUAL TRIUMPH

Not the multitude, but the man, is the object of God's watchfulness. One of the mysteries of history is the loneliness of Jesus. In all the great crises of his life no man stood with him. In the temple as a lad, in the wilderness temptations, in the garden, before Pilate, and on the cross he was alone. Verily "he trod the winepress alone." By himself he fought

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<sup>4</sup>"Sermons," Bushnell. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

the battles of life and could therefore say, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." As an individual he won life's greatest crown.

At the center of God's great plans stands, not the race, nor the nation, but the individual. There is no such thing as "herd morality" in the divine economy. While man is a social being and his life must touch other lives, he cannot submerge his individuality into the multitude and escape individual responsibility. While man has his obligation to his clan, to society, or to the nation, this obligation grows out of individual duty. The renewal of society always grows out of individual regeneration. "The social hope is always the best sign of individual renewal," and without his betterment the social hope could not exist. There are what are called the "sins of society," and rightly, yet every sin committed is by an individual, and only the individual can be held to moral accountability. Society is what the combined influence of the individuals makes it. A composite social conscience would be a curiosity. Every man must answer for himself to God.

It has been said of Bunyan's pilgrims that "Christian" was a truer Christian than her husband because she took her children with her. But "Christian" was true first to himself, to his own conscience and individual responsibility. Though all others should fail to start for heaven, he could not thereby be exempt. Men need to keep a level head just here. In this day of rigid solidarity, designing men want to hide behind the multitude, the corporation, or society. State laws are sometimes enacted to shield



the individual; but God, who holds the scales of justice, is not swayed by the crowd or fettered by State laws or corporation compacts. Souls are never condemned or saved in the compact. All worth of human character is founded upon the human unit, and here all moral accountability rests. Instead of being shielded by the compact, the individual member is responsible for its "sins" just to the extent to which he gives his consent or expresses his dissent from its doings. The mere fact of keeping silent makes every member *particeps criminis* in all transactions of the compact of which he is a constituent.

There is danger of carrying the "social obligation" too far. Perhaps the greatest offense committed by the old theology was in holding the individual to moral account for the sins of the "federal head of the race." This was resented as an *injustice* to the innocent and helpless individual, and as such it could not be thought of as the doings of a just and merciful Heavenly Father. The innocent and helpless do suffer because of the sins of others incurring the righteous wrath of all right-minded people. But *punished as guilty* they are not and cannot be. Many do suffer from the "sins of society," but the guilty ones are they who commit the sins and only they. Man's social obligation lies in the investment of his influence for the social betterment. Men cannot withdraw themselves into a castle of safety and let the rest go to destruction. The world is fast coming to recognize that individual salvation ultimately depends upon the social redemption. He cannot repudiate this and call himself a true Chris-



tian. To love God means to love all God's children, all for whom Christ died.

### THE VISION SPLENDID

In the great world plans of God the individual is not only bound up with the world as he touches it to-day, but the fruit of his fidelity and faith may come to harvest in the far-distant future, thus affecting people yet unborn. Not only are thunder tones heard in the far distance, but by means of the radio the human voice and music have been heard half around the world. Life is not lived for to-day only. Centuries hence will reap the harvest of deeds that were deemed as "fragrance wasted on the desert air." While it is ours to live nobly day by day, God husbands the deed and garners the final results, thus estimating life, not in fragments, but as a whole.

It is quite natural to desire to see the full meaning of life as it is lived. Shallow minds grow weary of the prolonged plot. Frenzied lovers want to "die the same day," and the ideal hero, *ἐνθρεος καὶ ἑκφρων*,<sup>6</sup> would, along with Lord Nelson at Trafalgar, vanish in a blaze of glory. Yet, is life so wide and varied that beauty and solemnity as profound are to be found in quite another direction. "If we are moving among eternal emotions, there should be time to show that they are eternal." Even love left desolate may feel, with a profound triumph, that it could never have rooted itself so deeply amid the joys of a visible return of affection as amid the many bereavements, and the lifelong memory of which is a constant joy. With "visions" none beside have

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<sup>6</sup>So inspired by one idea as to be emptied of all else.

seen, heroic souls are kept steadfast in duty's path; and it is a delight to recall such visions after they have faded from view, leaving only their memory in the soul whose fidelity "confirms the fiery finger which painted them there long ago."

As the Greek dramatists would end the first act of a trilogy with a hush of concentration and a declining note of calm, so to the Christian much of life amid the changing scenes of the many acts should suggest not so much the end as the continuation of the action, which is not measured by hurried time and not tested by the achievements here and now. So that the words of Robert Browning become pertinent when applied to the centuries:

Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be,  
The last of life, for which the first was made:  
Our times are in his hand Who saith, A whole I planned,  
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all, nor be afraid!

How great life becomes when lived with this incentive! The hero is not always conscious of the greatness of his deeds. He acts as the bird sings, under the momentary impulse and because it seems right to do so, and the world husbands the results. Men rarely reap the results of their own toiling. One sows and another reaps. Great authors and inventors have lived in want and died in obscurity, while others have grown rich and luxuriated on the fruit of the forgotten genius and his toils. To make money and grow rich was the least of their thoughts. Louis Agassiz told his friend that he had not time to make money. The martyrs and prophets toiled and died for ideals; we to-day reap the benefits of their heroism. The Reformers gave themselves to the

truth as they saw it; the world to-day enjoys the liberty of thought for which they died. Cromwell's life was far from being a bed of roses, yet he gave to England many centuries of the best régime that the nation ever saw. How long does the influence of a statesman last? The light of Moses is still aglow after four thousand years, yet he died without setting foot on the land of "milk and honey" which he bequeathed to his Hebrew people. Such men inaugurate new epochs and leave it to others to enjoy the fruitage. Never was this truth told more beautifully than in the New Testament. Here the heroism of the old dispensation is recalled, the faith of the fathers and their sufferings are recited, the idealism and disappointments of the whole high ancient world are cited with this conclusion: "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided [in the far-future days] some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."<sup>6</sup>

They who sleep in Flanders' Fields gave themselves in supreme sacrifice for a victory they themselves could not enjoy; but millions of others have been enriched beyond measure by their sufferings, and God will see that the day shall never come when the fruitage of that victory shall cease. A ruthless Gentile sent our Lord to the Cross while he was yet a youth, and it may have seemed that his life was cut short before reaching its flower, and all was lost; but, as Jean Paul Richter saw it, this same youth "lifted with his pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the streams of centuries out of their

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<sup>6</sup>Hebrews xi. 39, 40.

channels, and still governs the ages." Those who sometimes lose hope and grow weary may well console themselves with this far-off harvest truth. God sometimes sends his sowers forth weeping, bearing precious seed; but his reapers shall return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves, singing the corn reapers' songs of victory. God plans not for one day only, but for untold ages; and while his workers "rest from their labors," their works fail not, and God alone knows what generation shall thrust in the whetted sickle and garner the golden grain.

#### AN AMELIORISTIC WORLD

While ours is not the pessimist's "worst possible world making for ultimate ruin," nor yet the Leibnitzian "best possible world as it is to-day"; it is, as Jesus saw it, a world full of beauty and worth, yet burdened with "tribulations"—an *amelioristic* world, growing better age after age, a world of infinite possibilities, and day by day unfolding the marvelous plans of God, that his will may be done in earth as it is in heaven. To be a part of such a world and to assist in the ultimate accomplishment of such plans is the crowning glory of mankind.

Thus we have reached a very imperfect conception of human life as a wise Creator planned that we should live it. To the impatient, shallow-minded soul it may seem all confusion and a path to certain defeat; but to the trustful, patient one with faith to penetrate deeper than the eye can see such a life is the "royal road," the way to true greatness and all that is at all worth while. As with the manly student who finds that difficult problems and athletic



"scrims" call him to his very best, so with the true soul this life, with its many moral problems and difficult soul tasks, only springs him to his highest and best. Such a life to him is indeed inspiring, most fascinating and glorious.

Our Saviour approached life from exactly this angle, and at no time in all his illustrious career do we find him at variance with God's world plan as herein briefly set forth. Joyfully he entered into life with all its seemingly adverse conditions, patiently he bore up under its burdens, and heroically he triumphed in the end. His whole experience was in demonstration of the wisdom and beauty of God's thoughts concerning man and his victorious achievements. It was life cast in just this mold that our Saviour came to assume, to redeem, and to glorify.



## CHAPTER V

### HUMANITY'S DARKEST SHADOW

“While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.”—*Matthew xiii. 25.*

## CHAPTER V

### HUMANITY'S DARKEST SHADOW

THE very fact of God's offer of his gift of infinite love, with our religion as its avenue, would seem to imply that there is a great darkness to illumine, a great gap to fill, a vaster life to live than anything we may know by nature. And in our experience we have found it so. "Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound." God is beautiful in the sunshine and the sparkle of the morning dew; he is more beautiful still in the glow of the stars by night. He is great and good, fathomless and adorable to the soul of the upright man; but never so lovable and great as when seen in his compassionate mercy for a sin-burdened world. There is no god comparable to him who heals the hurt and lifts up a bruised and fallen humanity.

Man lives in a world where God is, but where sin is also. Men are far from a unit in their opinions as to the origin of life, how sin got into the world, and of man's primeval state. But one thing is sure: evil is in the world, and the "Eden tragedy" is being reenacted every day we live. Every child born into the world finds an Eden of innocence awaiting him, out from which he must go of himself if he ever drifts astray. Yes; the tempter is present on every hand. Every rose has its thorn, every joy its possible sorrow. By every opening pathway evil stands with beckoning hand, saying: "This is the way of pleasure; walk here and find wealth."

This is life's most tragic chapter, full of mingled mystery and glory, yet the life we all must live. To some it is a poem full of beauty and charm, while to others it is deep tragedy.

### WHENCE CAME EVIL IN THE WORLD?

If we would rightly understand what personal sin is, we must first consider what moral evil in general is. From this source sin follows as fruit from a vine. Sin is the individual result of the dominance of evil in the life of the man. Evil is natural; sin is personal and results from preference in conduct. Evil may and often does exist independently of personal willing. We speak of evil thoughts, of evil impulses, of evil influences, and of social evils. Men are "tempted with evil." Yet all this may occur without any sin in the individual. Men are not sinners till they yield to the influences of evil and become its victims. Sin, therefore, implies the functioning of personality and morality. Good and courageous men may and do resist the Siren songs of evil temptation and live a righteous life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

Why is there sin in the world, and how did moral evil begin to be? Man has long and anxiously asked this troublesome question, but has never been able to find a satisfactory answer. We cannot help asking such questions, since curiosity is the main-spring of mind. When we cease to question, we cease to think. Evil is in the world and besets us on every hand. It affects us more vitally than any other influence in life, and is the worst enemy we have. What wonder then that thinking men in all

ages should try to learn something of its origin and its nature? To ask why evil should exist is a hopeful indication in man, because it recognizes evil as an abnormal fact in human life. To ask why good exists would indeed be a wail of despair. To continue the struggle against evil after centuries of seeming failure is truly heroic, and voices the conviction that evil is not a part of the universal order, and therefore not necessary nor sovereign, but subordinate and to be overcome. It is ever a false note and most difficult to harmonize. But since for ages men have failed in their attempt to solve the problem, shall they cease trying? Is there not such a thing as the progress of thought, and have not other age-long problems been successfully explained?

#### SOME PAGAN ATTEMPTS

The ancient pagan attempts to solve the problem of the origin of evil only pushed the difficulty farther back into the darkness of the past. Grecian mythology taught that Ati, the eldest daughter of Zeus, was the evil genius who, by blinding all, caused evil to appear in the world. Besides this there was the Zoroastrian idea of a dual divinity—in fact, two gods, good and bad, of equal power. The warfare of these conflicting powers has continued forever. Then, there was the Roman conception of a god for every separate impulse, whether good or bad. In the doings of their thirty thousand gods they found a source for all their ills and misfortunes. But all these and like attempts are but the shifts of helpless humanity to get rid of a difficulty by transferring it from the human to the divine realm,



or laying the responsibility for evil upon the shoulders of others besides those of man. In keeping with this is a certain very pious theology which would heap all the evils of the present on the shoulders of our distant ancestors, or make sin a necessity in the development of goodness.

Besides this, there has been the attempt to ignore the existence of evil. Poets have tried to sing away the hideous deformity, and good men have at times been led to close their eyes to the awful fact. So holy a man as Thomas Aquinas, wrote: "God created all things; but sin is nothing, so God is not the author of it." Pope says in his "Essay on Man":

"All discord, harmony misunderstood,  
All partial evil, universal good."

Then even Robert Browning has this line in his "Abt Vogler":

"The evil is naught, is null, is silence implying sound."

Besides this, there are certain present-day theories which are based upon pantheism pure and simple. They say that "apparent evils are not basal entities or things. They are simply the absence of good." And "God is in all, God is good, therefore there is no evil." All this is but a camouflage and counterfeit of ancient follies long since outlived and too childish to require dignified consideration in a treatise on so serious a subject as the welfare of the immortal soul.

The rock on which all these "nothing" theories are wrecked is *practical experience*. This has shown that evil as a moral quality is as real as good, and the temptation to evil is often the stronger of the

two. The desire for evil pleasures is no less vital than that which seeks the pure. The will to do evil is just as strong and often stronger than the will which prefers the righteous action. The end sought is no more negative in the one case than in the other. "If evil be a 'nothing,'" says Henry van Dyke, "it is a strange, active, positive, and potential nothing with all the qualities of a 'something.' This 'nothing' theory of evil raises a still more difficult question: How did evil, which is a mere nothing, come to have the reality of life and the power of an awful something?"

There are theories of evil based on necessity; but these are all disguised variations of Fatalism, which in reality only intensifies the problem in hand by abandoning the very foundation of moral distinctions. If one has no choice of action, but must live the life thrust upon him, be that good or bad, where can there be accountability, or any ethical quality whatever? All sense of good and evil would vanish from our thoughts under such conditions. Such a suggestion, even, would be an affront to intelligence in quest of light on life's difficult problems.

Is it not a little strange that these theories of evil, deflowered of any beauty they may once have had, should continue to live at all, much less receive serious attention in this our practical age? They find no support in the common experience of mankind. Men everywhere admit that there are certain things which are allowable and certain other things which ought to be condemned. True, there are certain actions which involve questions of casuistry.

There are occasions when the quality of the deed must be determined by the motive which inspired it. The same deed which would be lawful and right for one person to commit might be entirely wrong for another. For example, an officer might confiscate property. This for him would be an act of patriotic duty; but for a private individual it would become an act of larceny. Here and everywhere the idea of right and wrong pertains instinctively, and no amount of sophistry can deprive sane humanity of this moral sense. Though done up in the garb of religion, the nature of the philosophy is not changed.

#### EVOLUTION NO HELP

Evolution, in the construction of a theory of the human race, could not have failed to run into the vexed problem of evil in human life. This problem it could not evade. In its attempted solution of evil, the old and well-founded method of treating the subject is reversed. In place of innocent childhood followed by degenerate manhood, the evolutionist paints the picture of childhood savagery, up from which we all have come. Up to a certain stage of development primal man is conceived as having no moral sense; but subsequent to that stage the soul emerges and moral and religious sensibilities are felt. Now, what we call sin to-day the evolutionist tells us is the lingering trace of animal savagery which men have not yet been able to cast off, as the tadpole sheds his tail. In the optimism of this philosophy they tell us that it is only a question of time—a million or two of years—till all sin will disappear from the life of man. They tell us in

effect, not that men love darkness because their deeds are evil, but that their deeds are evil because they cannot help walking in darkness, for a few millenniums at least. And they say that the fatal blunder of mankind lies in man's not having sufficiently evolved from the primeval state of apehood. The race calamity, therefore, is not the result of deliberate sinning, but in delayed progress, which we of to-day could not help.

But from all this what light can we gather to illumine the problem of evil? There is ethical sanity in holding man responsible for forfeiting an innocence by an act of deliberate disobedience; but what can we conclude, how extricate ourselves from the confusion, if Eden were an African jungle and Adam an ape into whose cranium an ethical concept had never crept? Not being versed in the vocabulary of "apeology," we admit the truth of being nonplused.

This theory of the origin of evil has two outstanding fallacies: (1) It makes God—if there be a God in the Universe of Apehood—to be the author of all primal sin, since the state in which man first found himself was fatalistically evil. If man should achieve goodness at all, it must be by climbing out of his first estate. Under such circumstances, the logical inquiry would not be, Whence came evil into the world, since that is normal? but, Whence came good, the abnormal and superhuman something? (2) The other fallacy is seen in the fact that this theory destroys the very foundation of all ethical conceptions, in that it makes the sinner to be the helpless victim of a natural order not of his making and leaves him the sport of forces over which he has no control.



Such a theory clashes with all man's moral instincts and outrages his sense of justice. It is at least reasonable to condemn a mature man, at whatever stage of human history, for forfeiting an exalted estate of innocence which he knew, in which a kind Creator had placed him; but what reason or justice is there in condemning a helpless infant for not leaping out of his childhood crib into a manhood of which he knows nothing whatever and of which he has but an instinctive hint at most? Yet some men would tell us that this failure was the "fatal blunder of the race" and the source of all our human calamities.

It is but fidelity to the truth to say that for the half century that the "nebular hypothesis" has held sway in the scientific world it has not thrown a single ray of light on the origin of evil and its remedy. Evolution has pointed out the "origin of species by natural selection," and spoken splendidly upon the upward trend of mankind; but upon moral questions, such as the origin of evil and sin, it has only "darkened counsel by words without wisdom." Its advocates have left the old paths and struck out toward the jungle with all their tangled mazes of guesses in an imaginary world. Yet these *guesses* are what they offer a sad world as "science," from which, if real, there can be no appeal. Nor has the world's thought been enriched by their departure, though we would not claim for the old school the final word on such dark problems.

#### WHAT THE OLD MASTERS TAUGHT

The old masters, having back of them the facts accumulated from experience, together with the best



that could be wrought in psychology and vital theology, lead us at last in the direction of light, and not as blind leaders of the blind. One cannot but feel safe under their leadership, since they test every step they take.

In their attempt to account for the origin of evil and sin in the world they pointed to the natural fact that all qualities have their counterparts—light has darkness, cold has heat, hope has despair, right has wrong. In the normal process of thought the existence of one implies the existence of its negative. If light be the absence of darkness, darkness is the absence of light. The human mind cannot conceive of the creation of light without the possibility of the absence of light being darkness, or the creation of good without the possibility of its opposite, bad or evil. In a moral world like ours, where all depends upon the functioning of personality, where character and holiness depend upon the exercise and determination of the sovereign will, there must be an alternative of choice. Of course we all believe that God preferred that the world he had created should remain "good," that man should choose the good and live a righteous life; just as he preferred that we avoid the violation of all nature's laws and escape the suffering that violation brings. But in making the good choice possible, the bad choice must also be possible, as the alternative to a free individual soul. All depends upon the liberty of choice in the sovereign will. *Liberty of will*, then, which implied the power of a contrary choice, was the doorway by which evil crept into the world. This *liberty*, so disastrous in its abuse, is held by man as the most

precious right in human possession, and when rightly exercised becomes the crowning gift of God to man. There is no class of men, high or low, learned or illiterate, rich or poor, where the love of liberty is not found and where slavery is not a most chafing bondage. So that, with all the dangers possible, mankind prefers the thrill and daring of choosing for himself. For this, and only this, he is responsible to his Maker.

### THE HEREDITY OF EVIL

Out of the exercise of the *liberty of choice* and its abuse has come the still darker mystery—namely, the heredity of evil, resulting in a distinct trait of character. No fact of science is better established than the heredity of natural characteristics. It is commonly expected that offspring should partake of the traits of parentage. The establishing of character in one generation by a voluntarily fixed habit in a parent of the former generation has long been recognized as a fact in nature. “Like begets its like,” and by persistent cultivation an instinct becomes intensified in course of time. The effect of environment, added to the natural ability, produces the greater characteristic; and the habit which became “second nature” in one generation becomes “real nature” in the next and is permanently fixed in the child, thus originating a new species, giving us, where good is predominant, some of the noblest characters in life, but also, where evil is uppermost, the worst possible characters. Were the good not an inheritance along with the evil, life would be a dismal calamity into which it were better never to

have been born. But the good along with the evil is present with equal chance in either choice.

In spite of all our race progress, no darker picture presents itself to-day than the inheritance of evil with its intensified results. In all its blighting power evil has come tracing down the centuries and spreading laterally through all the strata of society. All about are innocent sufferers from bodily deformities and repulsive diseases which are inherited misfortunes left as a legacy by a former generation. Even in the normal individual the animal instinct often predominates over the spiritual motive and restraints, entailing lifelong struggles not of our making or choosing. Here is to be found the source of many evil agencies which work human defeat—such traits as mental stupidity, lack of initiative and courage, preference for the groveling, tendencies toward insanity, rascality, and the like—all of which are recognized as legacies from a former generation. Toward the victims of such traits the ethics of to-day have come to be commendably lenient, since they suffer from the sins of others, which lead to their own sinning.

### THE CONTAGION OF SOCIAL CONTACT

But, while individual traits have come running down the ages through the channels of biological coherency, this is not the only channel through which sin is inherited. A more deadly agency still is found in the contagion of social contact. Over the innocent, too often, society spreads its dismal pall of ostracism confining them to an atmosphere of social degeneracy, where sins of the worst sort are

generated and where conditions arise worse than death itself. Here sporadic tendencies to sin arise and evils emerge whose seeds were not in the blood of ancestry. By social contact evil has gone on reproducing itself in forms that amaze honest and pure parents. Thus sins of boyhood—lying, deception, unchaste conversation, and cruelty—are transmitted from the older to the younger members of the gang. By the same method the sins of adults are generated—selfishness, greed, social spitefulness, extravagance, “graft,” pride of dress, the mad rush for luxury and pleasure seeking. All of such sins are propagated in the social atmosphere and are transmitted from individual to individual and from generation to generation by the contagion of social contact.

The permanent vices and crimes are by no means all inherited from parentage. They have been received more from the contagion of society than from blood. Foundlings, when carefully reared in a pure atmosphere, often make the chastest of citizens; while children of the long lines of purest blood, sadly too often, are caught in the turbid social current and go down in disgrace. Not more certainly are disease germs planted in the blood of an unborn infant than are the sins of society forced upon the life of the younger and helpless generation. As people drift to the city and society becomes more compact and complex, so the contagion of evil will increasingly multiply and become the more defiant of control.

In the light of the solidarity of society as we see it to-day can we understand why it was that the old



prophets treated the sins of Israel more as the sins of an individual than as the sins of a nation? Yet those sins were national rather than individual. While individual responsibility cannot be entirely eliminated from human life, there are times and conditions when this must be largely suspended. The individual becomes submerged in the social whole. Some rulers and men of "big business" often desire this state of things. Their subjects or laborers are viewed as mere human machines, like pawns upon a chessboard, to be shoved around at will. This is true of all armies, which are merely vast fighting engines. This fact is defiantly prominent in the industrial and commercial world, and is becoming so in the social world, in which we all must take our place. Here conditions are thrust upon the individual of which he does not approve, and deeds are committed which are not of his making. Yet, being a factor in organized society, he is reminded that "since he runs with the pack he must howl like the wolf." Being in Rome, he must do as Rome does. This racial relation is as old as civilization. "Man," says Philo, "is a social animal by nature. Therefore he must live not only for himself, but for his own family, for relatives and friends, for his tribe, for his country, his race, and all mankind." Thus, being compelled by nature to live for the parts of the whole, and also for the entire world, he is responsible for and must suffer with the whole of his tribe or nation, and, in a measure, with the whole world. His fortune and fate are bound up with his party, union, or Church. In their prosperity he finds his own glory, and in their ignominy he feels



the sting of shame. It is a law of universal social organization that he should feel this *particeps criminis*. We are parts of a social whole and have our share of the burden whether we will or not.

Thus, since individuals are interlocked in the social whole, we can see the wisdom of regarding society as an individual which must be held responsible for conditions which no one person can control. "Society," says Hugo, "stands in the pillory with every criminal who is there."

### THE RACE BLIGHT

This natural evil is the "blight" of the race, the infected atmosphere where sin thrives most luxuriantly. This is that state called by St. Paul "the carnal mind, at enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is the cause of that deep antipathy in unregenerated minds which makes sin seem so plausible and right living so difficult. This evil cannot always be classed as "sin" in the active sense. We inherit it whether we will or not, and we cannot be held responsible for that which we did not occasion. There is a tendency in certain cults of late to ignore this fact and treat evil as if it were not. But evil is one of the most stubborn of facts in human nature, and this evil bent is all the worse for being within the camp. Our duty lies in bringing this "nature" under and in keeping it in subjection. The possession of an evil inclination is not the fatal fact, but yielding to it is. By fighting against all such misfortunes and natural evils and overcoming them, man becomes a hero, a saint of the finest type. But yielding to

evil is man's fatal blunder, since thereby he becomes a *sinner* and has enlisted in a cause which may bring him untold trouble. This warfare against evil and the triumph over it constitute the very lifework of a Christian; and our Saviour, having won the victory here, could say with triumphant acclaim: "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

### GOD'S HIGHEST FAVOR

In the creation of man as a moral and sovereign soul and placing him in a probationary state with strength sufficient to triumph over evil the Heavenly Father has bestowed upon man his freest, highest creative favor. Man's sovereign right to dispose of his own destiny constitutes the noblest part of his likeness to God, in whose image he was created. In this God has shown his own confidence in the being he has created, and has given him the opportunity to achieve the noblest destiny possible. In all this God is benignly fair. In the matter of heredity the good traits have ever the same opportunity of being transmitted as the bad, if they have not indeed a better chance. In the Decalogue, where the law of heredity is invoked, the wording is, "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and showing mercy unto thousands [of generations] of them that love me, and keep my commandments." In our shortsightedness we have considered only the heredity of the evil and forgotten the good. We have remembered the pain and see not the love back of it all. We see the piteous suffering of helpless women and children, and want to call

the law of nature which imposed the burden a cruel one, without seeing the end in view. In the ministry of suffering God is doing all in his power to keep us in the right path; and in making our wrongdoing to recoil upon those we love, he is appealing to the strongest force in our natures. In the mere matter of the fear of punishment there is only selfishness, and no religious merit; but in the consideration of others there is highest virtue. Here we find the patriotism of statesmen and parenthood, here the wonderful love of God. Now, man's noblest trait and strongest love are found manifesting themselves for those most dear to him. Who has not known parents, mothers, to die for their children? They would often much rather be dead than have disgrace to fall on their beloved families. This thought is back of much suicide.

Now, if love of wife and children be the noblest passion of man, was it not the wisdom of love for God to appeal to this in the development and protection of human character? Show man that "an act of sin destroys more Edens than his own" and, if there is a spark of manhood in him, he will do his best to keep himself from sinning. This is God's way of thinking about man's relation to life and the path to greatness, hence a law of life.

The matter of choice between right and wrong comes to all sane souls alike. The same energy which, when expended in evil doing, carries man down with frightful speed, would, if applied to good, accomplish its marvelous wonders, resulting in a life of honor, love, and high confidence among men. Thus it comes to be seen that what at first

seemed to be only a race hardship and handicap is, in fact, the greatest of opportunities; and what some have deemed a personal calamity comes to be recognized as the greatest of God's blessings.

Then may we not rightly conclude that it was best that man should have been created a free, moral being, sovereign in soul and entrusted with the custody of his own destiny? Thus it pleased an all-wise Creator to make him; and upon this basis we know all human life is constructed and all moral accountability rests. Without the sovereignty of choice man would be something entirely different from what he is; but what that "something" would be we have no means of knowing, unless it were a race of incompetents wholly without liberty, hence incapable of any moral character of religion whatever.

All the facts go to show that evil in the world to-day as we see it, together with the more powerful good, harks back to a far-distant ancestral choice which, persisted in, became a "life," transmissible from parent to child. Thus the race peculiarity was acquired; and, but for the law of heredity and the wisdom to control it and determine its results, each generation would have come into the world on the level of ancestral savagery. Each soul should have had to climb the hill himself, race progress would have been an impossibility, the greatness of our day unattainable, and the future a dreary wilderness full of roving nomads.

God in his infinite wisdom has created us moral beings and governs us by the law of love, assigning suffering as a penalty for wrongdoing, but joy and



gladness as a reward for right doing. He nowhere governs us by coercion, not even by the overpowering influence of love. That man does go astray in spite of all inducement to right living does not detract from his native grandeur. As St. Augustine so forcefully put it: "The horse which will sometimes go astray is more noble than a stone (statue) which has no power of action." In like manner let us remember that the human race, with its powers of personality and privilege of loving and serving God, even though this implies the possibility of going astray, is more glorious as a race than it could possibly be without these capacities. The all-wise God seems to have thought so from all eternity; then may we not lovingly learn so to think with him concerning the life he has allotted us to live, and by the right use of the powers and privileges he has given us come to the highest possible attainment in life in time and in eternity? Into just such a world our Saviour came to invest his own great life, thereby redeeming us from this "present evil world" and showing by his own spotless life that evil is not supreme, but can be mastered and overcome by human personality aided by divine grace.



## CHAPTER VI

SIN: THE MORAL BLIGHT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

"Now art thou cursed from the earth. . . . A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear."  
—*Genesis iv. 11-13.*

"In the long run the test of any religion will be its power to arouse repentance and religious consecration. It is one thing for a theology to nurture a life already Christian; it is quite another to beget the Christian life. A church must be something more than a theological orphanage. It must bear its own spiritual children. It is a *sense of the reality of sin* that alone can make the gospel anything more than a graduate lecture course in Christian ethics. A religious message that cannot stir sinners to repentance is not the gospel of the New Testament."—*Shailer Mathews.*

To want to be saved, men must want to be saved from something—from personal disgrace and eternal damnation. And this is *sin*.

## CHAPTER VI

### SIN : THE MORAL BLIGHT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

SIN is a fact of such proportions that it cannot be ignored. It is writ large on the face of humanity. As an element of discord in the universal moral order, it is a *terrible reality*. A sense of its blighting power has ever been back of humanity's sorrows and age-long sigh for relief. To attempt a denial of its baneful results would be to falsify the universal experience of mankind. Nor need we wait for a full knowledge of its nature before seeking to avoid its consequences. It is enough to know that it is here and that it ruins. Sin is humanity's most dangerous foe. It besets man not only in the earlier ages of his development, or in an insanitary social circle, but at all stages and in all conditions of life. It intrudes itself into the life of the learned and rich as well as into the life of the poor and humble, and with the same blighting breath would blast the fairest flower in a king's palace as ruthlessly as it would ruin the child of the cottager. No amount of artful camouflage can hide its ugliness nor costly silks and diamonds take away its deadly sting. Gold cannot bribe it into innocence. We may willfully close our eyes to its presence, but to ignore it is not to escape its clutches or stay its consequences. The attempt would be to try to reverse the order of nature and show lack of moral honesty.

Sin is not to be defined as easily as it is to be felt. Each attempt at a definition would vary according to the experience of him who makes the attempt, and all attempts would fall short of reality. Every genuine feeling of sin throws light upon the reality and helps one to comprehend that which may not be told. We may not be able to explain how it is that man may feel free enough to be fully responsible for his thoughts, feelings, and actions, and yet conscious at the same time that he is joined to a common ground in human nature. Stranger still is the fact that this propensity is felt to be not an excuse but an aggravation. "Anger is felt to be not a palliation for an ugly deed, but grounds for further condemnation."

Looked at from the viewpoint of the individual, sin has been defined as "missing the mark" (ἀμαρτανῶ), that perversion in man's nature which causes him to fail of accomplishing his true destiny. From a legal point of view, "sin is the transgression of the law"—a going beyond the prescribed limit. Both of these concepts are wrapped up in the fact of sin.

The consciousness of sin is a religious fact. In our secular conversations we speak of *crime*, *falsehood*, *dishonesty*; but when expressing our religious feelings we find no word to suit so well as the word "sin." Deeply fixed in man is his moral consciousness, his sense of "oughtness"—that some things should be allowed, while others should not be. No man can remember when he first felt this *moral sense*, and no history dates its genesis as a race attainment. It is the very foundation of religion, a gift from God in the nature of man. Disobedience

to this "still small voice" constitutes man a sinner. To disregard this and run counter to its edicts, is to become disloyal to the moral order to which man belongs. And since the "natural order" is God's law, to disregard this is to disobey God, to put one's self out of right relations with God, and out of harmony with the laws of his own being. It is this discordant fact that is back of humanity's deep sense of need and that smiting of conscience in the soul of the sinner.

Sin is not to be considered as an infectious disease, a something acquired from the outside world to germinate and spread throughout the entire man—not that, but a personal matter, a derangement of the soul which throws it out of harmony, like the discord of an ill-tuned instrument. This state persisted in begets a false standard of life whereby the highest, noblest sense is lost to the soul. The key to the correct harmony of life becomes a "lost art" in the soul of the sinner. He may mar his soul, but he can never mend it. A good man is never self-made.

#### SIN AS JESUS SAW IT

As Jesus saw it sin was a very real something. Any effort that we might make to define sin as he saw it would fall far below what we instinctively feel was his real estimate of it. One might as well attempt to define life or death. To him sin was not a mere negation, but a positive reality. While he showed marvelous pity for the victims of sin, he was a deadly enemy to the existing fact. Nor did he narrow it down to an illegality, and, after the customs of the day, seek to escape it by conforming



to certain ecclesiastical laws. He himself often broke the laws of the Pharisees, and both by precept and by practice dared to shatter the statutory righteousness of his times. He laid down the broad principle that it is the life that counts, and this life back of the act determines the quality of the deed. No man is saved because of the multitude of his good deeds, but his deeds are good because they are prompted by righteous motives. On a memorable occasion Christ found those who were so deeply degenerate as to have lost the sense of ethical distinctions, so that good was supposed to have been generated by the prince of devils. Those men he considered entirely hopeless, since they mistook the acts of God for the works of Satan.

As estimated by Christ, sin is antisocial. In emphasizing features of sin he made prominent the fact that a life not controlled by love is a wrong and sinful life, since love in its thoughtfulness of others is highly social. With him sin is not simply unrighteousness; it is a disintegrating force which hurts society. Men who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others" were sinful men. The rejected and outcasts of the kingdom were those who, in the midst of abundance, cared not for the poor and needy; while the "blessed of the Father" were those who fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned. To call God "father" was to call every other man "brother." To be a sinner then, as Christ saw sin, was not only to be out of right relation with a God of love, but also out of right relation with all mankind. Sin is, then, not simply the violation of

a certain code of laws or organized government; it is essentially a matter of adjustment between two personalities—between man and man, and between man and his Maker. It is first of all being right or wrong with God that makes one right or wrong with his fellow man. It would be folly to speak of a man being right with God and at the same time wrong with his neighbor. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Sin is not only antisocial; it is essentially selfishness, out of which the antisocial feature flows as a stream from a fountain. In all its ways it is self-centered and egoistic. In the soul of every one there is a throne, and some power must reign supreme in the personal realm. There rulership rightly belongs to God. That throne was erected for the divine dominion; but the sinner has rebelled against God, has dethroned him in the heart, and set up self in God's stead. His own desires, whims, ambitions—and not God's will—are the laws of his life. Men who have deified self have no higher law than their own desires; being out of right relation with God and in open disregard of his will, they come to indulge freely in sin, and are often dead to moral obligations—in fact to all kinds of obligations except such as seem to further their personal designs. Such persons become entirely unsocial. Such men have slight regard for the rights of others, and press their covetous will to the injury of society. "They are willing to frustrate the cause of liberty and social

justice in whole nations in order to hold their selfish, social, and economic privileges. Men who have been powerful enough to do so have left broad trails of destruction and enslavement through history in order to satisfy their selfish caprice, avarice, and thirst for glory.”<sup>1</sup>

In its highest form, sin assumes the aspect of a conflict between the selfish ego and the common good of humanity—between the self and God. This renders the sinner unlike God. Certain godless traits sin everywhere produces, such as selfishness, sensuality, pride, hatred, the desire to succeed at the expense of others. Such sins are contrary to the law of love, and tend to enslave the soul and deflower it of its likeness to God. This in the teachings of the Scripture is exactly the condition of the “unsaved” man. To be dominated by such a spirit is to give oneself over to that downward pull which makes right living so difficult, unrighteousness so plausible, and the future so dark. Dr. Shailer Mathews sums it all up in these words: “The soul whose likeness to God lies in the fact that he can love and serve and hope and sacrifice, has prostrated himself to the lowest nature which hates and lusts and lies and fights like a beast.”

By such relations personality is injured and, apart from the redemptive agency, the soul degenerates utterly, reaching that which to the mind of St. Paul was the summary of all terrors—namely, “abiding under the wrath of God.” Sin clearly enough reaches its climax in the struggle of the sensuous nature of man to assume the ascendancy over

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<sup>1</sup>Rauschenbusch.

the spiritual personality, which should be loving, as God is love. This we know is essentially altruistic, while sin is self-willed and militant toward all self-denial.

### SIN BLIGHTS THE SOUL

Sin is most deadly to the sinner himself. While it is a fact that when God comes to reckon up the final consequences of sin "all humanity is in the council chamber," yet the first result of sin is realized by the sinner himself. While sinful acts reach out and ruin others, they first blight the soul from which they start. There are sins which hurt only the sinner, such as pride, profanity, hatred, infidelity, and envy; yet these are sins against God and eventually hurt the soul and bring suffering to the sinner.

Men sometimes want to persuade themselves that the Heavenly Father is too merciful to allow the full penalty of sin to come upon the sinner. But they forget that "a God all mercy is a God unkind"; that a merciful God must also be a God of justice; that a God of love must be a God of infinite righteousness and law. "In God the law is alive," says Dr. Dale. The very element of tender compassion in the nature of God demands the far-seeing administration of right in the moral order of the universe, which implies the punishment of the guilty as a preventive of wrong and the protection of right. Think as they may, men cannot escape the fact that "a terrible God is the God of love." The jealous Jehovah of the Hebrews is our same loving Heavenly Father whose heart is wonderfully warm toward his earthly children. This is he who is



immanent in nature everywhere. In spite of the rich treasure of parental love in his father's house, "with bread enough and to spare," the prodigal went steadily down to want, wretchedness, and pigsty disgrace. Even the infinite love of God cannot prevent such a fate if men willfully prefer such a state of degradation.

Men may deceive themselves into thinking that God will "wink" at wrongdoing and allow dishonesty to become the highway to success. They may find fair sailing for a season, but storms await in all such voyages. It has always been so, and God is not dead in these days of high criminality. His ways have been the same in all ages. Witness the downfall of the nations of history, the crowded felon's cells, the wrecked home circles and broken hearts of the day—not to mention the woes of a war-crushed world. There stood the mailed form of the late Kaiser across the seas, with his mighty war lords, his far-famed chemists, his "big Berthas," all ready to do his bidding in following the ancient Prussian tradition that "might makes right" and the substitution of the will of the Empire for justice and truth; while beneath his feet lay the *sacred treaties* with the nations, and poor, bleeding, raped, and ruined Belgium, whom the Empire had sworn to protect. But where now is that mighty "Imperial Government of Germany"? Gone like a burnt-out meteor from the sky, leaving the people who did his bidding writhing beneath the bitter burden of defeat and ruin, while the nation's memory is a hideous nightmare and her name a reproach among men! He forsook the old paths and defied God and his laws;



while his college professors who had drunk so deeply of the fountain of learning, instead of being true to the oracles of truth, cringed in the presence of power; and when the world looked to them for light and guidance, they became not true leaders and friends, but traitors and foes. To-day they are reaping their reward. Men may think God forgets; but when does he? Does he not hold even "imperial governments" to an account for wrongdoing?

#### THE SINNER SELF-CONDEMNED

No man knows the results of sin better than the sinner himself. He is not the "unlucky man" who happens to get caught in an ugly deed; but he himself is the "fact" in the sinning, and no amount of so-called good deeds can take away from the sinner the consciousness of sin. "A guilty conscience is its own accuser." The individual, and not simply his conduct, is "enmity against God," and this fact gives color to the life known as sinful. The sinner cannot forget that he is a sinner and go on the rest of his days living a holy life. It is the fact of character held in the indestructible grasp of memory that makes all the difference between the true, righteous man and the unholy one. The one fully aware of his oft-infirmities, his human weakness, and many failures knows that at heart he is loyal to God, and his highest aim is to do his Father's will; while the other, with all his pious pretenses, knows that he is at heart a sinner in the sight of God and a rebel in his kingdom. This lingering consciousness stands out as an appalling obstacle between

the man now and his future well-being, both for time and eternity.

### THE FACT OF MEMORY

If memory were a mere matter of will power, so that one might will to remember or forget at pleasure, then sinning might make but little difference in the economy of life. We might then all go free from sin's consequences by simply "laying down our memory" at sunset and taking up life anew on the morrow. At death we might leave our sins forgotten in the grave and live a beautiful life of bliss beyond, spotless as a babe born in the Paradise above. But what is memory? Is it a mere act of the will, or is it not rather an involuntary organic function of consciousness—a part of the state of life both of body and soul? The poet Dante, in his "Divine Comedy," tells of a great fountain in Purgatory which flows in two streams. One he calls "Lethe" and the other he calls "Eunice," whose waters had the double power to take away from those who drank thereof the memory of all evil deeds and to bring back the memory of all good ones. Were this a fact rather than a poet's dream, what a wonderful stream it would be, and what would we not give for a quaff of its waves? Many a man would turn away from his evil ways and "follow virtue like a star" if only he could hush the voice of an accusing memory and go free from its influence forever. But the memory of the past haunts him like the baying of a bloodhound upon his track. The past rises up and assails him by all the agencies which mortgage us to the future. Since

memory is a part of us—life of our life, part and substance of our growth—what way of escape have we from life's tragic history? Shall the shadows of time lie across our pathway forever?

In one of his sermons, the late Newman Smyth says: "The mind of man is but a chamber of memories, a hall of echoes, a gallery of endless whispers. In its archives are annals of the past. Mind is but a labyrinth of memories. Recollection is but a torch in the traveler's hands to guide him through the mazes of the past, leading him from chamber to chamber in the wonderful palace of memory. In her vaults are the many receptacles for the records of the deeds done in the body. Though many of them seem to have been lost and the names written over names, yet the record of the years remains imprinted deeply in the very structure of the soul." As a physical and mental fact, memory acts independently of our wills to a large degree. Though at a particular time we may not be able to recall an event, yet that fact is not really forgotten, and at some unsuspected moment the whole scene comes back clearly enough.

#### NATURE HAS ITS MEMORIES

Scars from wounds remain after the hurt and harm have been long healed. The habits of ancestry come down from the past like birds from a distant clime to sing their sweet songs of the long ago, or like owls to hoot their condemnation of evil deeds of which we have no knowledge, yet fasten their thralldom upon us for generations. What is more remarkable than the outcropping of a remarkable

mental ability found in a child of mediocre parentage? The explanation is often found by a research in the archives of the past. The prodigy is but the "memory" of some gigantic mind long forgotten, but renewing again its life. Though but a "current of events," our plastic flesh has a memory all its own, which retains the features, gestures, motions, and images of loved ones long since gone. Nay, it reproduces the ages before our parents were born, and preserves the life processes of the race since the beginning. Perhaps instinct and "subconscious mind" are but fixed traits or waves of bodily memory which are constantly lashing the shores of the present.

Memory asserts itself through all the organs of the body. The eye, the ear, the finger tips on the harp strings, the nerves silently at work beneath our active consciousness, all have their memories, while the brain is one vast sensorium of memories—that power without which the soul could scarcely maintain the consciousness of consecutive existence or even intelligence be a possibility.

#### GOD'S REGISTRY OF EVENTS

Now, since memory is a recognized bodily fact, an indestructible part of us, the sentinel and keeper of the accuracy of human intelligence, may we not take one additional step forward and say that it is God's registry of the deeds done in the body, an imprint written not only upon the body but upon the soul as well? When the soul passes from this present life, it will go not the same as when it came fresh from the hand of him who made it; but it will



go as that original soul plus the impressions received in this life, increased or diminished by the good or bad it has occasioned. It is not difficult to see how every line of the present life may be etched upon the soul as it goes out into eternity, and the future life be the embodiment of the memories of the life on earth. In that life beyond one cannot escape the impressions of this present life. They may become our eternal reveries to all eternity. Did not our Saviour show us this in the parable of the "rich man and Lazarus" when Abraham is made to say, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things"? This echo of time was the "rich man's" food for reflection to all eternity. From that echo from the past there was no escape. No "Lethe" flowed in the abyss for him. Memory is eternal. This fact is essential to celestial sanity of the soul. It cannot by self-determination cease to exist.

Nor is this yet all. If memory be God's registry in the soul of the deeds done in the body, can it be possible for God to decree that a fact of the history of the universe, once inscribed on the annals of time, shall no longer continue to be, but become as though it had never been? If the finite mind cannot forget the great character-making events of life, can the infinite Intelligence do it? If man's memory of the past shall become a fragment of the history of the universe, may we not carry the thought just one degree farther till we reach the memory of the Eternal One, and ask, *Can God himself forget?* Can he decree that sin, or any other great fact of life, shall be to him as though it had never been? Here is the crux



of the entire problem of the forgiveness of sin; and till we shall find light upon this problem we shall grope in awful darkness.

Compared with this, all other religious subjects pale into insignificance. If there be no such thing as the forgiveness of sins, and if it be not possible for God to "blot out our transgressions and remember them against us no more"—then, since evil is in the world and man has fallen victim to its power and become a sinner, it were a sad misfortune ever to have been born. But God is good; he is omniscient; and it was he who made us, and not we ourselves. Then let us take refuge in the belief that it was infinitely best that God should have created us and that we should know for ourselves that God can and does forgive sins.

It may not be comely in a finite creature to ask or discuss what an infinite Being can or cannot do. The forgiveness of sins is not simply a question of divine ability, as though God were willing, but had not the power to forgive sins. But with us it becomes a question of the discovery of what God, the infinitely perfect and merciful Father, from all eternity has been doing and will ever continue to do. For is it not by his deeds that we discover his character?

## CHAPTER VII

THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN: GOD'S OPPORTUNITY  
WITH MAN

“What then is the service rendered by Christianity? The proclamation of ‘good news.’ And what is that ‘good news’? It is *the pardon of sin*. A God of holiness loving the world, and reconciling it to himself by Christ Jesus, in order to establish the kingdom, the city of the soul, the life of heaven on earth—here we have the whole of it. But this is revolution.”—*Amiel’s Journal*, January 27, 1869.

“Who can forgive sins but God only?”—*Mark ii. 7*.

“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”—*Genesis xiii. 25*.

“I confessed my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgivest the iniquity of my sin.”—*David, in Psalm xxxii. 5*.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN: GOD'S OPPORTUNITY WITH MAN

EVERY approach to the question of evil and its offspring, sin in the life of man, has for its justification the possibility of the forgiveness of sin and the overthrow of evil. Were this not a fact, it were foolish, if not a crime, to recognize sin at all. Why tantalize a prisoner upon the terrors of his captivity from which he can have no escape? Even in pagan mythology the bound Prometheus found his liberator in the person of Hercules, who slew the devouring vulture and loosed his chains. Shall we in our Christian theology find none to deliver us from sin? If sinners can find no forgiveness, then how explain the problem of human existence?

The gracious thought of the forgiveness of sin and the redemption of man must have been in the mind of God when he conceived the idea of creation and said: "Let us make man in our image." Both for the well-being of the created soul and the vindication of the wisdom and mercy of God, it must have been so. For to have created man as we know him—namely, a sovereign personality with ability to choose the path in which he should go, and thereby acquire inborn tendencies, good or bad, and leave him without the probability of escape from the consequences of an unwise choice and without the hope of salvation—were indeed a freak of creation unlike the

doings of our Heavenly Father. Hence the dominant idea with God in the hour of creation must have been not to create an innocent or pure being only, but a possibly holy one as well. In doing this God did not stop with the creation of the pure snowflake or the innocent lamb, but did infinitely nobler when he created man, the possible holy being.

Holiness, we know, is not a matter of creation, but the fruit of sovereign choice; and man alone has the ability to choose good rather than evil and to obey God rather than self, thus becoming holy and god-like. Since holiness is a quality of personality, it was not possible for God to create a holy being. Man is good and holy or bad and sinful, not because of his creation at God's hands, but because of his own choosing and his self-determined character. The creation of man under such condition left it the prerogative of God to provide against the consequences of a wrong choice. Hence from all eternity God must have planned for the redemption of man and the forgiveness of his sins. Such an element must have been inwoven in the very character of God.

Man is here, and he has sinned, and sin is an awful curse; so we must believe that while God hates sin and must punish it he has all the while loved the world and cherished in his own consciousness the fact that the sinner could be forgiven and redeemed. And somehow this redeeming mercy of God stands out as the crowning attribute of the infinite Creator.

"It was great to speak a world from naught,  
But greater to redeem."

Unless there were a redemption from sin and a



cleansing from evil, however fortunate one might be in escaping sorrow and the consequences of sin in this present life, eternal life would be a manifest calamity and an irreparable blot upon the character of the Creator. It would be idle to dream of eternal joys after being in this sinful world, if the memories of our wrongdoings are to haunt us forever and guilty consciences are to be intensified in that holy eternity. Without forgiveness death would not bring us that rest for which we sigh. Of what avail then would the beauties of heaven be—the sight of angels and the companionship of the blessed—if, as with doomed Dives, there were between us and the blessed the impassable gulf of a guilty conscience? Or how stand before the throne of God and be happy in the light of his holy presence?

God's blessed forgiveness cannot bring back the forfeited estate of innocence. He cannot undo the history of sin; but he can forgive the sinner and, through the avenues of this unspeakable gift, open to him the pathway of grace leading to the joys of the redeemed, a kind of bliss the innocent cannot know. The prodigal son went into sin, disgrace, and want, and there remembered his father's house of plenty and heart of love, the depths of which he had not hitherto discovered. Far be it from us to hint even that sin is an essential in the economy of God; yet we know that the episode of sin, shameful as it is, furnishes an occasion for God to make known the depths of redeeming love. Great and good and just and merciful—not because of, but in spite of, the world's wickedness and sin—is our Heavenly Father.

That God will not allow sin to go unpunished has been demonstrated in all parts of his dominion. For him to fail at this point would be for him to show himself less than a sovereign God. The same revelation shows him to be a God of justice and a loving Father, welcoming the returning prodigal home. This good God could never have been so far pre-occupied by and obsessed with maintaining his kingdom and preserving the dignity of its laws in the punishment of the guilty as to leave unheeded the penitent cry of his erring children. God must punish sin; his nature demands this. Yet all sin is committed in a world of which God is the righteous and gracious ruler and Lord; and while this world is God's realm, it is at the same time the homeland of his earthly children and the arena of their probationary trials and sorrows. Here God rules in righteousness for man's eternal well-being, and in loving-kindness to him he demands righteousness and truth between man and man.

No sin is ever punished by the righteous Ruler out of a motive of vengeance or from wrath, but from love and as a preventive measure against wrongdoing, hence for man's good. It is man's benefit and ultimate destiny, and not the stern vindication of justice, that God is seeking. While he hates sin, he loves man and has given a most costly demonstration of this fact. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; yet this same expression of love voiced his disapproval of sin. Of all God's attributes, there is none which more sublimely establishes his sovereignty than this display of divine compassion and pardoning grace. "Who can forgive sins but God

only?" This was his prerogative, and only with him have we to do; and as a sin-pardoning God he has revealed himself. A better method of self-revelation has yet to be conceived. The redemption of souls and the salvation of the world constitute the highest achievements of God on earth. Here all schemes for human betterment and social uplift find their source. Though man may never penetrate to the depths of God's pardoning love, and a satisfactory philosophy of the Atonement may never be written—it has not hitherto—yet the fact remains that God does forgive sin and cleanse the believing soul, thus establishing that at-one-ment with himself which all his redemptive agencies—the coming of the Messiah, the gift of grace, and the Holy Spirit—imply. The saints of all ages have given testimony to their personal realization of this blessed fact. God has put the matter beyond the peradventure of a doubt; for is not all nature permeated with the principle of redeeming grace and pardoning love? Has not all vigorous life the instinct of self-healing and the power of restoration? We see it everywhere.

#### A PRECIOUS TRUTH LONG DELAYED

One of the mysteries of Christian theology is the slowness with which the idea of God the Father as revealed by Christ has been adopted. The God of the Gospels has been long neglected, while the God of Roman law has been made most prominent. This misfortune may be attributed to the vocabulary by which men have sought to express their thoughts of God. For ages men have sought to explain by terms of forensic thought how that God can be just, and

the justifier of them that believe on his Son. In so doing they have magnified the "justice" of God to the neglect of his sovereign love. They have gone into the courts of justice rather than into the family circle to find symbols in which to clothe their idea of God; hence they have presented him as a sovereign Judge and not, as our Saviour did, as a loving Father. However truly such writers may have thought of God themselves, they have failed to tell the story in a way to meet the demands of the better, saner thought of the world. When the New Testament was translated into the Latin a word was not found to translate the Greek idea of piety toward God, or "that which nourishes godliness," so the word "justitia" was used. Our conception of righteousness or holiness seems not to have been an element of the Roman's religion. With him "justitia" was the highest quality of religion. So when St. Jerome, about A.D. 383, made the translation which is known as the "Vulgate," he used the words, "*ut sit ipse justus, et justificans eum, qui est ex fide Jesu Christi.*"<sup>1</sup> Now the word "justitia" has been translated almost literally into our English Bible; hence we have God presented as the "Justifier" of them that believe on his Son. The idea seems never to have occurred to the translators that the Greek word δίκαιον had any such meaning as *to make righteous or holy*, which is the true Gospel use of the word. So that in place of giving us the deeply religious idea of a holy, righteous God, *making holy or righteous* those who believe on Jesus, as we know true faith to op-

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<sup>1</sup>Romans iii. 26.



erate to-day, theology got the forensic idea of a Judge demanding justice in the vindication of laws violated. With this idea in mind great theologians have gone forth to find how God could "justify" the ungodly. They have attempted to balance affairs in the scales of eternal justice. Seeing that sin produced suffering, and assuming that suffering was God's penalty for guilt, they reached the conclusion that "so much suffering for so much sin" was well-pleasing to God—that by this suffering, borne by the proper one, God would be "placated" (pleased) and "propitiated" (made more pitiful). These are the stock terms of theology as it has been handed down to us to-day. By this method of interpretation many precious teachings of the Scriptures have been twisted from their true meaning, and God presented to a prodigal world, not as waiting Father and blessed companion whom the soul might gladly seek, but an august Ruler from whom the soul might well escape. This theology overlooked the fundamental fact that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish"; and saw "the wrath of God against sin nailing his beloved Son to the cross," thinking that in the suffering of his crucified Son God would "see of the travail of his [Christ's] soul, and be satisfied," and thus by the preponderance of suffering the sins of the world might be "atoned for" and mankind be redeemed. Is it not amazing that anyone could think that God would bless such an un-Christlike presentation of his nature and works? This for a thousand years has been presented to the world as God's method of atonement.



It seems never to have occurred to earlier writers that "God was in Christ Jesus reconciling the world unto himself," that it was God who was in travail of suffering and anguish, that every sin committed sends a shaft to the heart of God, that from all eternity God has carried in his heart the great love wherewith he so loved the world. Was this the Being to be balancing so much suffering against so much sin in order to find a motive for pardoning his repenting children? Shall we speak of the sovereignty of the love of God and proceed at once to bind that love in chains of inexorable laws? This we do, not thinking how that in using words we mar the idea of God by making the Author of all laws to be himself the slave of forensic laws. If by suffering or any other "placating" process one might "propitiate" the divine mind and thereby furnish a motive for the redemption of mankind, that were indeed to vitiate the very truth sought to be established in the gospel of Christ—namely, the gracious forgiveness of a repentant sinner as the sovereign act of a merciful God.

By what method can the unchanging mind of God be propitiated—made more pitiful? Must the infinite, perfect God be spoken of in such terms? If by some mysterious process all the demands of Eternal Justice could be satisfied, and the guilty thereby go free, could that by the laws of right thinking be called a "pardon"? *Justification* it might be, but gracious forgiveness never! "Suppose it were possible to explain God's motive for forgiving the sinner by saying that his guilt had been legally transferred to Christ on the Cross, and the merits of Christ had been legally transferred to him,

so that the crucified Christ was declared legally guilty and punished in the sinner's stead, while the believing sinner is pronounced legally righteous and goes from punishment, what effect would such an idea have upon the inner life of man? Apart from the frightful confusion it would introduce into the moral realm to think of God as the author of such an idea, what conceivable influence for good would such an idea have upon the soul? Does it bring inward peace to a man's soul to be declared innocent or righteous when he knows that in reality he is not? Does it reconcile a man's inner life to God to have the merits of another attributed to him by a legal fiction, while his own soul is out of harmony with God?"<sup>2</sup> There is no room for what Phillips Brooks calls "the fantastic conception of the imputation to Christ of a sinfulness which was never his, of God counting him guilty of wickedness which he had never done."

The human mind revolts at the punishment of the innocent for the guilty. Those instincts which lie deeper than reason are insulted by the thought of transferring the merits of one to the credit of another. The moral sense could never find peace in the contemplation of such a forensic and fanciful transaction. It is totally unlike the loving Heavenly Father.

#### CHRIST'S IDEA OF GOD

At whatever cost in giving up old opinions for new truths, let us not fail to grasp the idea of God as taught by Christ in the Gospels, and hold to that

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<sup>2</sup>"Gospel for a World of Sin," Van Dyke, p. 120. (The Macmillan Co.)

under all circumstances. Christ's high mission to earth was for the sole purpose of being, himself, a revelation of God, the Father incarnate. While this "revelation" may have traversed all other conceptions of God, and its adoption may spoil some of our fond theories, this alone is truth and must prevail. All else must fade and be forgotten.

With this in mind as a central thought we may hope to find the solution of many of life's problems, as well as to unfold the promise of the future. If we wish to determine God's attitude toward certain issues—toward evil, toward sin and human redemption—let us learn what Christ taught on such questions; for he said: "I and my Father are one." Wherever Christ was found or whatever his teachings—in the temple, in the wilderness temptations, on the holy mount, in the upper room, in Pilate's hall—he is there revealing the Father. In the parable of the prodigal and his father, which feature is made most prominent, the father's vengeance or his loving mercy? In the garden and on the cross, Christ would die rather than make a false revelation of his Father. To this death he is constrained by love, not driven by vindictive justice. (John iii. 16.)

While we may never know the full measure of the power back of all this, we know what it means to the world and to our own hearts—namely, God as our merciful Heavenly Father, who woos us, redeems us, and takes us to his own embrace. Deductions from this Christian experience, together with a careful study of the Bible, have not only given us a better understanding of Christ, but a truer view of God. These have shown us that God the Father is no

arbitrary sovereign merely; that all that Christ was God is, and has always been; that "God is as good as Christ"; that the proper sovereignty of God is a sovereignty of grace and not of power or holiness as an abstraction unmodified by love in the sense of benevolence and clemency.

The whole Deity is a suffering Deity, is an atoning Deity; and the Father as well as the Son takes upon himself the burden of the sin problem of the world. The mediation of Christ has not the least relation to the willingness of God to save. The term "placate" has to do with disposition; and when applied to God in his attitude toward the sinner, it is a myth. While the atonement as a *vicario-vital* fact is a modern conception, it is a true one. With it also has come the conception that the propitiation of Christ was a divine self-propitiation; and when this term is used by St. Paul it implies rather a fact of revelation, and not an inducement brought to bear upon God to persuade him to be merciful and to save. It is the story of what Christ was—what he endured and what his spirit was on the Cross—that does more when rightly told than anything else to make plain to the world the true idea of God and to win mankind from sin. This is the light which clears the fog from our spiritual sky and makes beautiful many of our religious problems which were dark and repulsive.

#### NOT A CAST-IRON DEITY

"God is no cast-iron deity, equally unmoved whether his creatures sin or not. Jesus was never more loving or more divine than when he stood on Olivet with outstretched hands toward Jerusalem



and wept over the city that knew not the day of its merciful visitation. When sin entered the world, pain entered the heart of God, Christ brought that suffering to our view so that we could see and appreciate it.”<sup>3</sup>

The charge is sometimes made against Christianity that it is a bloody religion, that it glories in that which should be a shame to any right-minded person—namely, that he had escaped a just penalty due to his sins by having it laid on another and an innocent one. “Such is a misrepresentation,” says Bishop Coke Smith, “of the great fact of salvation through Jesus Christ. He suffered no penalty as a guilty one. He was not conscious of sin; he did not die to pay a debt to the devil or to appease the anger of the Father. It was not a governmental proviso by which the divine sovereignty was saved from wreck and dishonor. It was no commercial arrangement by which there was a transfer of debt from one party to another. Sin had not generated a certain amount of wrath in God which leaped from his hand indifferent as to whether it fell upon the head of the guilty man or upon the innocent Son of God. Such conceptions of the work of Christ find no warrant in the word of God. There was no schism in the Trinity which was healed by the superior goodness of One. Christians glory in the Cross, not because of the sufferings it displays as an end, but because of the love which would dare all suffering in order to save the loved one exposed to danger.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>*Methodist Quarterly Review*, 1903, p. 222.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, page 224.



## ONLY LOVE CAN FORGIVE

Age after age men have gone on saying that by his sovereign prerogative, and purely from an impulse of mercy, God cannot forgive the repenting sinner; when as a matter of simple fact and undying truth, this is the only ground upon which *forgiveness* is at all possible. Eternal Justice could never forgive. It could declare judgment, award merit, adjust penalty, and maintain equity. Were there only justice in the character of God there could be no redemption for sinful man. This is the work of sovereign Love, manifest in the infinite mercy of God. Salvation, therefore, which means eternal life, is the free gift of God! On conditions which he has made known, his love is bestowed and his pardoning grace is received; and no sacrificial act of any kind, not even the death of his "well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased," could have changed the heart of God and made him one whit more willing and anxious to forgive than from all eternity he has been. This God whom we saw manifesting himself in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, can and does forgive sin and redeem sinners who through faith are made holy and right with himself. This cleansing and making holy is that at-one-ment which is at the center of all salvation and which Christ lived and suffered and died to make known and to accomplish. Blessed estate, at one with God because made fit to be in harmony with him, cleansed and kept by the power of God through faith in his Son! Apart from this cleansed condition, and with the soul steeped in sin, there can be no at-one-ment,

and any theory of the atonement which leaves this out presents a travesty upon the truth.

### A MOST BLESSED MEMORY

The soul in which this divine reality has been accomplished has felt an experience which towers above and overshadows all other memories. A patient, on convalescing, may in the joy he feels over returning health well "forget" the suffering and pain through which he has just passed. So the forgiven sinner, in the great joy he feels over being redeemed from sin and made whole again, does "forget" his former sinful state. To all eternity this blessed reality will be the cherished consciousness and golden memory of every transported soul. The unnumbered hosts in glory are the "redeemed of the Lord," and the theme of their celestial rejoicing will ever be: "Saved and made holy, washed in the blood of the Lamb."

No man, not even the great Apostle, could literally forget that he was once a sinner, but "saved by grace." This was St. Paul's majestic theme. "Saved and made holy," "By grace are ye saved," "Free from the law of sin and death," "Let us walk in newness of life with him"—these were terms often upon his lips, because the theme was ever as a flame aglow in his heart. The same God who has power to create and sustain life has power also to renew it, to transform sad memories into glad ones, to change the soul's sad theme into the rapturous consciousness of a redeemed life of love and joy and peace. The "glory of God in Christ Jesus" lights up all the dark recesses of sin's memories in the soul, and makes

them to glow with the eternal light of the redeeming love of God. The more distressing the path of sin through which the sinner has passed, the more exulting the joy he feels over the fact that God has saved him out of it all and has "put a new song in his mouth," even praises to the Lord.

The doctrine of divine forgiveness and being cleansed from sin is not stressed and not realized as it should be to-day, yet no fact of religion is more real and no experience more blessed. "That God has power on earth to forgive sins" has been testified to by millions of saved souls in all the ages. They vie with King David in saying: "I confessed my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." The consciousness of souls cleansed and made right with God is the fountain of all their joys and the beginning of the hope of everlasting life. What a blessed experience may flow from this divine fountain! "Having been made free from sin, and become servants to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

While the Scriptures make no distinction between the forgiveness of sin and the cleansing of the soul unto holiness, yet, for the sake of convenience in treatment, we speak of forgiveness of sin as God's side of salvation—and thus far we have discussed God's ability and willingness to forgive the repentant sinner. There is a human side to salvation, with all its joyous strength and victorious hope. God has done and will do all that is consistent with his nature to redeem and save souls, yet man, as a sovereign being, has his part to perform, and without his own coöperation he must forfeit all God's gracious gifts.



## CHAPTER VIII

THE NEW LIFE FROM ABOVE: THE HOPE OF  
HUMANITY

(11)



### JACOB REDEEMED

“Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a *man* with him until the breaking of the day. . . . And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. . . . And Jacob called the name of the place “Peniel”; for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Peniel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh”—a crushed humanity, but a glorified soul. There his *life* began.—*Genesis xxxii. 24-31.*

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE NEW LIFE FROM ABOVE: THE HOPE OF HUMANITY

WITH sympathetic approach, rather than antagonism, there is no reason why the evolutionary theory of the origin and development of life on earth might not be a staunch ally rather than a foe to Christianity. The Christian postulate of spiritual life is summarized in the statement of our Lord when he said, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly";<sup>1</sup> and this gift of *abundant life* was implied in the statement: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."<sup>2</sup> Science in the evolutionary theory of nature's progress sees a higher order of life appearing with each advancing species, but rejects the "intrusion of an outer creative Force." Christianity, on the other hand, finds here a scientific basis ample for spiritual generation. Here is the avenue of life from above; here the crisis of the "more abundant life!" Without this "intrusion" of a creative Power from without, this impartation of a greater life, the "gift of life from above," how can we account for evolution at all? Nature cannot evolve that which is not involved. Every result must have an adequate cause. Without the divine impulse, how could there be any progressive life, how get the greater from the less? With no "outward creative Force," how get

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<sup>1</sup>John x. 10. <sup>2</sup>John iii. 3.

the animate from the inanimate, mind from matter, soul from animal life? Eagles cannot be hatched from owl eggs. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.*

The instinctive longing of the lesser, the potentiality and the progressive attainment unto the higher life, is in proof of a greater outer Force or Life waiting to bestow the greater gift implied in the instinctive longing (as in our Christian religion), the "life from above," the higher life of freedom, sufficiency, peace, and love. Granting that all religious phenomena, even to salvation and soulhood, "are potential in the sunlight," is it not a fact that at every step of the way in that marvelous unfolding, from the nebulous state, every new species, every greater life, even to the crown of eternal life, has been and ever shall be the "gift of God," or the intrusion of an outside Force?

### THE OLD LIFE A BONDAGE

The inherent longing of normal soul for freedom, for the privilege of living his own life and developing his own personality in a manner best suited to himself, is itself an inspiration," a reaching out for a better and higher life. Such an instinct is discovered very early in childhood, and we never outlive that longing. The development of personality would be simple were it not for certain influences which seem at times to rival all other forces. Every man feels instinctively that he is not entirely free, and his bondage is not of his own making. His life is not satisfactory, his mind is not entirely clear, he cannot trust his better impulses, and he longs for some sort of transformation. Whatever be the cause of this

defeat, or by whatever name we call it, man feels that it alienates him from God

There is no necessity for the continuation of this alienation from God. All Christianity stands pledged for its removal and the restoration of the soul's harmony with its Maker. The fact that the alienating cause lies deep in the nature of man does not argue its eternal fixture there. The fact alone of the depths of man's imperfection calls for a divine remedial agency, and this is the ground for the offer of God's mercy and love. God's gift of blessed sonship with himself rests upon man's deep need of just such a relation, and this offer is God's guarantee of the possible removal of that sense of servitude to sin which every unsaved man must feel. To deny such a soul-restoration and rob man of the freedom which he craves most of all, would make that craving the most mysterious something in all God's dealings with mankind. The development of God's plans for man implies the unfolding of his personality; but this may be entirely defeated by man's failure to comply with necessary conditions.

#### HOW ACCOMPLISH THE RELIEF?

The difficulty remains: how to break the "fascination of the old life" over the soul and let it go free to live the new, higher life. It will not suffice to seek such a radical change in a mere suggestion, or some pathetic memory, or in some flash of danger, as do Stevens and Snowden in their *Psychology*. Such a change is not merely a moral reform, but is realized by voluntarily turning to God and laying hold upon him. In this act the soul passes from the condition

of estrangement or indifference to one of interest and friendship and trust, which will involve in many lives a complete revolution; but the moral revolution is not "conversion," but the result of it, the result of the *new life from above*. This comes of the acceptance of God's offer of mercy, of new life and love, and the surrender of the whole life. God has many agencies of mercy, many avenues of approach to the soul, many voices by which he can speak; but in them all God is "intruding" into human life, the Spirit speaking for Christ to the spiritual nature of man, awaking it, though dead asleep and helpless, and giving it power to arise and step up into the higher life for which it has so strangely longed, though unwittingly.

While the "life from above" establishes a new personal relation with God, whatever the producing cause may be, it all depends upon the interest man takes in his own spiritual life. His new relationship with God must arise from some new conception of the nature of God. As a sinner he resisted God, no doubt because he fancied that God was against his life. He hated God because he knew that God condemned his sins. Somehow this estranged soul must be made to understand God, to see his love and mercy and his heart stirred to love God. How can this be done? Both the revelation of God's true character and the winning of the heart to God must come through a Person. Christianity is the relationship of Personalities—the Personality of Christ to that of man—and this relationship is God's means of bestowing "new life" and restoring soul freedom.



## THE HOPE OF HUMANITY

It was a truism with St. Paul that, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."<sup>3</sup> And this moral transformation of the individual is the deepest foundation for the hope of humanity. This has been the supreme interest of great preachers and reformers in all ages of Christianity. But was this interest a mere whim of fancy of a religious cult to be forgotten and fade? What does it mean? Is it not the calling of the individual soul to go free from the bondage of the old life and to live under the sovereignty of a soul transformed and upheld by the Spirit of God? Does it not mean the victorious assertion in the name of Christ of moral manhood over brutehood, of soul over sensuality?

Who can believe that the unregenerated life as we see it to-day is the kind of life God intended that man should live, created as he was, in the image of his Maker? We believe in reality that such a thought would be equivalent to impeaching the wisdom and goodness of our Creator. Then who can believe that a God of love would have created a moral being free to choose for himself, even though wrongly, and not provide a way by which that being might retrieve himself when once a wrong choice had been made? From this point of view the moral transformation of man becomes a necessity.

## NOT A RELIGIOUS FICTION

The high reality of this moral transformation as a religious experience and a distinctive feature of

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<sup>32</sup> Corinthians v. 17.

Christianity should stand first in the category of religious phenomena. In the teachings of our Lord it takes first rank. In the philosophy of religion it can stand nowhere else, since it is the fountainhead of all religious experience. But what place does it hold in the popular thought of to-day? It is a fact that in many religious circles it is a lost experience already to many. Nor has the Church at all times in her history treated it as a vital doctrine, despite the fact that regeneration is the bedrock of Christianity. So decidedly new and vital was it at the time of Christ that he must needs coin a term to clothe the unique truth, hence the word "new birth." A better term could scarcely be imagined. Real religion is a personal consciousness, and at whatever time of life that consciousness may be felt its beginning is "new life" in the soul.

This transforming work may take place very early in life, as it should, and at the time be a very simple process which leads up to a normal and beautiful Christian experience. Yet the time of such soul transformation must have come, the time of personal willing and deliberate choice in committing the soul to Christ, to remain his, to be fashioned after his own image. While it may not be possible always to tell exactly when the transformation takes place—with some it is with the calm stealth of the morning dawn—the "divine intrusion" at some time must have occurred or Christianity would be an impossibility. "Marvel not," said our Saviour, "that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. . . . For except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Is it at all strange, then, that where this doctrine is ignored or treated lightly the individual life is a religious failure? When the first essential is missing, how can the rest be perfect? Why is it that the doctrine has been so often and so long treated so lightly? Why have the scientists who are so quick to snatch up new facts, and are so untiring in other fields of research, shown such indifference to the phenomena of the spiritual nature of man and the power which frees him from his bondage? This is a major experience which is occurring daily somewhere, and the evidence is as available as any with which science deals; its processes are as explicable—rather inexplicable—yet science seems not to consider the facts. Why should it not be the aim of scientific theology to study the experience and lay in the lap of Christianity its powerful witness?

This seeming indifference of secular scientists to the great question is due no doubt to the fact that they feel that the phenomena of soul transformation, being of a spiritual nature, not a tangible thing, lie beyond the radius of their research. By many this silence is considered most consistent; for since "spiritual things are spiritually discerned," the attempt of the cold, unsympathetic scientist to carry his research into the realm of the spiritual would be to grope and blunder; and no one should be more conscious of this than the scientists themselves.

But why so many religious writers, who should be past masters in the secrets of religion, should have so little to say on the subject of conversion is indeed surprising. That some "enthusiasts" have carried the doctrine to extremes, thereby rendering the

subject distasteful to some, does not exclude the doctrine from the realm of things allowable, but calls all the more for careful investigation so as to establish its *eternal verity*. In discussing it we do not speak the language of a cult, the dialect of a province, the light parlance of a clan; but the spiritual mother tongue of the kingdom whose speech tells of the mighty works of God which are essential to the hope of humanity.

In spite of the slights of some and the abuse of others, the phenomena of conversion stand as a rock against which the waves of adverse criticism lash in vain. As a fortress it cannot be overthrown. How solve the problem of human existence without it—how “justify the ways of God to men”? Evil is in the world, and man has fallen a victim to its power. God, in creating, must have foreseen the possibility of sinning and the calamity it must bring to man, and in divine mercy must have planned to absolve him from the consequences of sin and lift him up into a higher, holier life. In the realization of this man is but discovering his destined atmosphere, while God is coming to his own. In highest truth, regeneration is the hope of humanity. To ignore it is to run counter to the teachings of our Lord and to set at naught the wisdom of the All-wise Creator.

#### A FLEXIBLE MATTER

In the matter of terminology the Scriptures, in this doctrine as with others, deals more with the spirit than with the letter. There is no scientific exactness in the terms used. “Regeneration,” “The spiritual resurrection,” “Born again,” are the terms



most generally used. W. N. Clarke was of opinion that "regeneration should be the favored word for describing, from the divine side, the beginning of the Christian experience." But there is a human side, and it is this that we would wish most to consider. The producing agency is not all; the experience as a dynamic in the life of mankind is the principal thing; and we are sure that it was in this wider sense that our Saviour spoke when, in his night talk with Nicodemus, he said: "Ye must be born again." It can readily be seen why he laid such stress on the great doctrine, since it is the genesis of the Christian life. Without it the soul must remain spiritually dead. In the matter of the soul's destiny where is there a subject of greater importance? Though it is an experience which varies as widely as the temperaments of men, and we cannot lay down hard and fast rules for its working—with some the experience is brief, clear, and sweet, while with others it is gradual and of a more quiet nature—yet this is a vast venture to be made in committing the soul into the hands of Christ for God and eternity, and in taking the Almighty One into deepest being, there to reign supreme forever.





## CHAPTER IX

NO FIXED LAW IN CONVERSION

“When I first visited that home there stood the woman clad in unwomanly rags, with the mark of a brutal fist upon her face, and three ill-clad children clinging to her skirts. ‘Excuse the children running from you. They thought it was their father.’ If I were a painter, I should like to paint you a picture of that home as I saw it a year later, on a Sunday afternoon. They had moved out of the hovel into a cottage up on Main Street. There sat the father by the fire with his three bairns who had run away from me a year ago. One was on his knee, one on his shoulder, and another standing by him. I never heard sweeter music than was made by the kettle on the hob that day. The woman who a year ago was in rags was clothed, and the smile of love was in her face. Why this difference? Her husband had been *converted*.”—*Rev. G. Campbell Morgan.*

“I know that I was *converted* better than I know any other fact in the world.”—*Evangelist Sam P. Jones.*

## CHAPTER IX

### NO FIXED LAW IN CONVERSION

ONE of the most difficult things for men to realize is the fact that real religion cannot be reduced to set, literal forms. He who attempts to do this with the Bible is the worst foe of Christianity. Our Saviour nowhere reduces his teachings to dead scientific statements. Even when teaching his disciples to pray, in dictating the famous "Lord's Prayer," he did not mean to tie all Christians up to praying in those exact words always, hence he said: "*After this manner pray ye.*" Men have tried to state the great Bible truths in exact form, such as is found in the Westminster Catechism, only to find that by so doing they were but making garments for dead statements rather than garbs for living truths. St. Paul's laconic statement, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life," has never lost its force. Life will not submit to being bound, but is ever vital; and Christianity is such a life, spontaneous and free. Conversion, therefore, as the first expression of real personal religion, may be expected to manifest just such peculiarities; and there is nothing strange in the fact that no two conversions are exactly alike any more than there is in that no two individuals are the same. Yet with all their variations the different conversions can be as real as religion itself. While the Scriptures give us one account of a spectacular surrender—Saul of Tarsus—there is no such con-

version recorded of the sweet-spirited John, the "beloved disciple," whom we may call the ideal Christian.

Conversion is God's work, and he does it in his own good way. The forgiveness of sin and the cleansing of the soul of its guilt are no small matter, even if we could understand all the process. But we cannot; and since it is a matter not of knowledge but of *faith*, a child can receive it as well as an adult. We must recognize, therefore, three different types of conversion: (1) Childhood Conversion, (2) Instantaneous Conversion, and (3) Gradual Conversion. Each has its distinctive features, but they all lead up to the same final crisis—namely, the gift of the soul to God and the finding of a home in the fold of the Good Shepherd, crowned by a sweet and blessed life.

### 1. CHILDHOOD CONVERSION

There is nothing more beautiful and consistent than the coming of a well-taught child into the kingdom of heaven in the morning of life. While not so spectacular as conversion after a season of sinning, yet it is the more normal and should be all the more common. It recognizes the claims of God to the entire life, and may spare the child untold sorrows and dangers in after life. Besides, is this not what the Scriptures mean when it is said, "Bring up a child in the way he should go"? or "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God"?

Our Lord here sets no limit as to age, nor does he imply that children should wait till they can "understand the step they are taking." Nor is there a hint



that the conversion of a child is not in direct line with God's plans of human life or that the child cannot be religious. The facts are on the side of the child. Religion begun in childhood is evidently God's approved way.

### *Does a Child Need Conversion?*

This is one of the serious questions of present-day Christianity. To ask it is to reveal directly the existence of one of our common invading evils. Yet to ask it of one brought up in the atmosphere of evangelism seems foolish. As well ask, Did I myself need conversion? or, Did Christ include all ages in life in his great declaration, "Ye must be born again"?

The denial of the child's need of conversion reveals not only the lack of a right understanding of our unsaved human nature, but it seems to imply that God did not intend the soul to be regenerated, unless first degenerated by a life of rebellion. Little do we dream of the general prevalence of the idea that conversion is the parlance of a clan, and in general is superfluous. This opinion has not only crept into the beliefs of many of our orthodox Churches, but is in fact world-wide in its insidiousness. Recently a representative of the "Religious Young Men of the Orient," while addressing an audience in Chicago, said: "We believe that man is sufficient of himself, if, as you say, a perfect God created him. If you will let him alone, he will be all that he should be. Educate him, train him, but do not bind him hand and foot, and he will be a perfect man, worthy to be brother to any man. Nature

has sufficiently endowed him, and he should use all that has been given him in intelligence before he trouble God for more. We have all the inspiration we want in sweet poetry and enchanting music and in the companionship of cultivated men and women." The speaker was a member of the Greek Catholic Church.

This was said in controverting the doctrine of regeneration and the need of the Holy Spirit. In the course of his address the speaker let fall the secret that the source of his inspiration was Teutonic rather than Scriptural. But coming back to the fact of human ability, he further said: "But when it comes to the following of our conception of that which is right and noble, that which is high and necessary for our development, we are wanting in strength and power to advance toward it. The fact is as real as the dignity of man, that there is a power which diverts mankind from the path of rectitude and honor, in which they know that they should walk. If you have a religion to bring to the young man of the Orient, it must come with a power to balance—yea, to counter balance—the power of evil in the world. Then will man be free to grow up and be what God intended him to be. We want God. We want the Spirit of God. Any religion which leaves that out is for us as no religion."

Notice that the two statements of the speaker were plainly contradictory. In the first the boast of human ability was plainly "cultural," while in the second, in which the want of "strength and power to advance toward high and noble things" was admitted, we can plainly hear the heart's cry of con-

viction. No amount of sophistry can take away from man the consciousness of the frailties of his great nature. This should be kept constantly in mind. A lack of knowledge or sincerity here is most dangerous.

Some very pious and well-meaning souls think that conversion was intended only for the viciously inclined and that unfortunate class whose religious training has been neglected and who allowed themselves to drift off into sin. They think that all some children need is good environment and careful training in order to grow up Christians. Yet nothing could be farther from the truth and more detrimental to the child. Let it not be forgotten that while all human agencies are helpful and at times powerful factors in shaping the destiny of the child, yet more than a human cultural agency is needed. Good environment and a pious home life every child should have; but the real unregenerated nature of the child should not be overlooked. While some children are more gentle and susceptible to religion than others, every child belongs to the fallen human family, and no unregenerated soul is ever safe. "We dare not trust the sweetest frame." The tempter lurks by every rose-strewn path; and they who refuse to admit this deceive themselves most of all. To leave the child untaught at this point is next to criminal negligence.

Yet we find in the "School of Religion" in one of our foremost universities men speaking with all the enthusiasm of a specialist, who do not hold with the old theologians that the child is completely under the curse of original sin, nor yet believe with certain

sentimentalists that he "comes trailing clouds of glory," but who emphasize the fact that the child has infinite latent possibilities for good or evil, either of which may be developed. "We know," say they, "that at the beginning the child is sinless, pure of heart, and with life undefiled"—without moral record. This awakens us to our duty, which is to *teach* the child, as they say, until he is old enough to follow the right path of his own accord, thus grounding him in right habits and motives which lead to a righteous life, turning his whole being to seeking accord with the Divine will. The process, be it noticed, is entirely human.

In these few words is stated the leading religious teaching of to-day. This we recognize as "fanciful," for does it not leave out of sight the one essential of the Christian life, "the new creature in Christ Jesus"? "Enabling power" is something all men need. Man is weak as well as wicked. He cannot of himself attain unto the higher life. Hence our Saviour taught his doctrine of the "new birth." Wise parents will do all in their power to throw good influences around their children. They know the molding influence of environment; but they will not deceive themselves in believing that their children do not need the redeeming grace of God. However consecrated they themselves may be, they know that righteousness is not transmittible. We may trust a hyacinth to produce its like and a rosebush to bear roses; but this natural law does not pertain in the moral world. From the homes of as saintly parents as live have gone forth children to follow the path of sin and become God-despising. We dare



not rely on family or blood or cultured social influence. These have all been tried and have failed.

Anyone who has had intimate knowledge of boys knows how early in life many of them develop tricky and selfish tendencies. While there is a great difference in children from different grades of society, yet they all show that they are human; and with us all life is a constant struggle against evil. Let this struggle cease and all is lost. There is no trouble in the development of vice. The development of virtue is the race task, and to do this we all need the "new affection" and the "new nature." Just as the wild tree must have the engrafted new bud to produce the improved fruit, so humanity must have the "gift of God" to live holy lives. Deny this and we deny humanity's need of a Saviour and his redemption, and we might as well burn our Bibles, close our churches, and stop all gospel effort. To deny humanity's need of divine grace would be to run counter to the plain teachings of our Lord and the common experience of mankind. The child needs the help of divine grace just as a flower needs the sunshine to grow fragrance and beauty. Being trained up in the atmosphere of religion and having been wisely taught the ways of salvation, it is as natural for the child to step into the kingdom of God as it is for him to go from childhood into manhood. Thus having been trained in holy living and habituated in the ways of religious thoughts and ideals, he is fortified against the invading evils of the day. From this class the Church gathers her most reliable recruits and lifelong supporters.



*When Should the Christian Life Begin?*

No exact date can be set for the beginning of religious development in the child. Certainly no time should be lost of the precious hours of the morning of life. Much depends upon the atmosphere of the home. Here the religious life of the mother counts for everything. "If the home is the heart of the world," surely the mother is the heart of the home. Home is what she makes it, and the characters formed there are largely of her shaping. About the Christian home there hovers the prestige of a thousand years of Christian civilization. This the mother can combine with the influence of her own religious life in forming the life of her child. All this a mother brings to her child when she dedicates it to her Lord, breathes her tender love into it, prays and weeps over it till it crystallizes in the image of Christ. Only thus can she hope to build up a character strong enough to resist the charms of sensuous nature and escape the corruption of the world through lust. From the mother the child imbibes its first ideas of God. If we were nursed at the breast of apes, we would all be savages. It is mother's God we learn to love. Mother's knee is the child's first altar, her religion is its creed, and her heaven the home of the soul. With what profound energy then should we defend the home against the inroads of present-day disregard of things religious, and establish more firmly the realm of motherhood as the stronghold of civilization. Here civilization lives or dies.

If the world is ever to be saved at all, it will have to be saved in youth. How inadequate and expen-

sive are all evangelistic efforts for the salvation of adults in later years! As compared with those saved in youth, how very few are saved in after years! The fewest become religious after becoming "settled in business," after marriage, or after entering the sacred precincts of motherhood! Becoming absorbed in the cares of life, they suppose they have not time to attend to this life business.

### *What Can We Teach Children?*

While there is much in religion which must wait for the fuller development of a greater capacity in the child, surely there is much of an elementary nature which can be and should be taught a child in his earlier years—such as obedience to parents, the love of God as our Heavenly Father, truthfulness of life, sorrow for wrongdoing, thoughtfulness for others, religious liberality, and the need of Christ as our personal Friend and Saviour. All these our parents taught us, and all of them and more can be taught any intelligent child very early in life. These simple teachings are among the first principles of religion, and without them religion at any time of life would be a most incomplete affair. With such teachings as these instilled the child readily enough comes to understand his need of being religious and from an instinctive tendency accepts Christ as his personal Saviour and is "born again" into the spiritual life.

What experienced pastor has not found that as a rule the heart of the average child is wonderfully inclined to accept Christ as his personal Saviour and Friend? At a very early date children can real-

ize much of the nature of sin and religion and appreciate often more than their seniors the tenderness of the love of Christ and affirm their own love of him, and their life attachment attests their sincerity. Their feelings have been touched, their minds enlightened, and their wills moved. They do not have to "turn and become as little children" to find their Saviour, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. They have not had the "experience" of an adult, and should not have, for are they not potential Christians already without having to pass through the "vale of tears" of their repenting seniors?

Such is the sweet, simple religion of a responsive child at a time when hearts are tender and character is being formed. But this stage of life must pass and the age of self-conscious adolescence follow, when personal willing, which must determine the subsequent life, must emerge. It is this which seals and keeps the child a Christian after childhood's days are gone. In the earlier stages the child was a cultural Christian, having been trained to love and trust Christ, as the child heart loves and trusts involuntarily; but now he has come to the direct surrender of himself "of his own free will and accord," which act completes and makes permanent the conversion of the child. Up to this crisis every line of religious culture should lead—to a cheerful, loving surrender of the entire self to Christ the Redeemer, which experience lies at the heart of all vital Christianity, whether it be in child-life or in later years. How can there be real religion at any time of life without this loving, trustful surrender to the Lord

and Master when personality is renewed and "new life" begins?

*An Easy Step for a Child*

It is often found that a well-prepared child can take this important step more readily than an adult. There is a secret assumption that such a thing as real religion is not possible to a child nor the knowledge of God as a Friend, when the real fact is, children are more capable of religion than many adults are. Did not the boy-child Samuel hear the voice of the Lord when Eli the aged prophet did not? Talk in a loving and tender manner to children about Christ and his love, tell them how close by he is in all their good thoughts, and they catch the meaning a great deal better than adults who have strayed into paths of sin. Children may not grasp the language of gospel experience as older persons will, but they can have the joyful consciousness of religion even better. They can make room for more gospel than their elders, and the highest and most spiritual things are instinctively close to them. Recently a class of young Christians was asked by their pastor to write out their answer to the question, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" A girl of fifteen wrote: "It is to believe that the Saviour is able to save you, that he will forgive you; it is to love the Saviour and try to do his will." Another of thirteen wrote: "It is to try to be good and do good and to love Jesus." Another of the same age wrote: "To be a Christian is to love and serve the Lord, to try to do as much good as we can, and to live as near to him as we can." A girl of fifteen answered: "To be a Christian is to love Jesus



Christ with your whole heart and to yield your will to his completely." One of thirteen gave this remarkable answer: "To be a Christian is to give one's whole life to the will of God." Children often understand much more about sin and religion than their parents give them credit for.

### *Objections Not Valid*

That so beautiful a something as the conversion of a child and his becoming a member of the Church should be objected to seems almost incredible. Yet such objections are often seriously urged. This grows out of a lack of knowledge of the child's needs and the nature of religion. The one objection so often urged is that the child does not fully understand all that he is doing. In this the objector is most sincere. True, the child cannot fully understand all that is implied in the step he takes; but who does? Can we apply this rule to all of life? Are there not many steps which a child must take without knowing why? Yet his very life depends upon his taking the step. How much do we all need to understand of the mysteries of life to live? Who has seen to the depth of all his problems? After all, is religion not a matter of faith rather than knowledge, and do we not all have to trust God rather than understand him? Shall we keep the child back till he may understand all about his own strange nature, all the mysteries of religion, and the depths of the love of God? That would be to close the door of salvation against him forever. How beautifully and clearly a child can comply with Christ's great



law of love to him, the highest law of the kingdom of heaven!

### *They May Go Back*

It is often urged against the conversion of children and their becoming members of the Church that they may not continue faithful. A little girl said to her pastor: "Why, if I join the Church, I may go back"—evidently voicing the sentiment of her seniors. "Yes," said the pastor, "and if you do not join the Church you may go back. The Church is to help to keep you from going back." Do all adults continue faithful? How is it with them as compared with children? A pastor held a revival exclusively for children in one of our best American cities. Fifty-eight came into the Church. Thirty years later, fifty-three were found to be faithful still. One had died, two had gone back to the world, while two had drifted elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> In a congregation of eight thousand the count was made, and in all that throng only one had joined the Church after sixty years of age, three had joined after fifty, fifty after forty, two hundred after thirty, five hundred after twenty years of age, while all the rest—seven thousand or more—had become Christians in childhood or the days of adolescence!—and this in an audience of mature adults, not children. Could there be stronger argument for the work of grace in the heart of a child? The same test has often been made with like results as to the fidelity of childhood conversion. The large percentage of the vast army of those who love their Savior are faithful to him, and are giving their lives to his

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<sup>1</sup>G. G. Smith, "Childhood and Conversion."

cause, who make the Church a progressive power for good in the world and are happy in doing so, did in early life give themselves to their Lord and have ever since followed in his footsteps with gladness. In the simplicity of their trustful natures they gave their young lives to him to be kept from evil and to live for God. Thus they did not form sinful habits to haunt them all their days. The experience of committing the soul to Christ made religion a personal affair, a deep and a *real* something. This is what we mean by childhood conversion. Is this not to use language in a true Scriptural sense, for does not this experience break up the trend of the old sinful order, establish a new and God-loving one, and put the young life in right relations with God? There is ample evidence in the Scriptures and in practical life to show that God intended the religious life to begin early in life. "As the twig is bent, the tree's inclined." The plastic young life awaits the molding touch of the hand of God, and every argument tends to the logical conclusion that an early conversion is in keeping with God's plan in the religious life. That the kingdom of heaven is not nearer to its world-wide completion and so many are spending their lives under the dominance of sin is due no doubt to the lack of a right understanding of the application of the gospel to child life and a more vigorous and Christlike application of the gospel to children. Surely the kingdom of heaven has not a more profitable and delightful task than the work among children.

## 2. INSTANTANEOUS ADULT CONVERSION

Youth is recognized as the logical time for the Christian life to begin, and if the work of the Church were ideally accomplished there would never be an occasion for conversion later in life. But we know that such is far from the accomplished fact, and sadly too many come to mature life in sin. The gospel is for all of every age and station in life. It would be un-Christlike, because of parental neglect or some other misfortune in early life, to deprive a soul of the chance of salvation. How many there are who, if saved at all, must be saved in mature life! To them the gospel message comes with convincing power; they are convicted of sin; they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved—at times in a moment. Now, with such people and those who all their life have been accustomed to witnessing spectacular conversion it is very difficult to believe anything but that their way of being saved is the ideal way or that a soul could be otherwise really converted. Yet this is but one method of conversion.

Let instantaneous conversion be mentioned and the mind at once goes back to some great revival occasion with ample evangelistic machinery, excitement, and great sensation—none of which is an essential to salvation or should be associated with so sacred a something as the conversion of a soul. The manifestation of divine power is not limited to such material conditions. That so momentous a fact as the conversion of a soul does produce some excitement is to be expected. Such has been the case since the days of the apostles. But let it not be thought that this is the only way a soul can be saved.

Great revival methods have their worth and also their dangers. For fear such a thought might become established and the power of God limited to such routine, many are coming to discourage the great revival and the spectacular conversion. If such were established, what force would be lost to the world!

The instantaneous conversion is a definite fact of history dating back to "when the day of Pentecost was fully come." Nor have its wonders ever ceased. The stories of such conversions constitute some of the most thrilling chapters of religious history and often mark the outposts of the conquest of the Cross. Under the earnest appeals of zealous Christian workers thousands have been awakened to trust God and have stepped into the kingdom of God in a moment to become faithful, lifelong Christians.

The experience of such conversions is by no means confined to revival occasions or a place of worship. Men like Savonarola<sup>2</sup>, John Calvin,<sup>3</sup> and Martin Luther have told how, like St. Paul, they came momentarily to change their way of religious thinking. Thomas Carlyle, in "*Sartor Resartus*,"<sup>4</sup> records his own striking religious experience, of which he afterwards said: "I there and then took the Devil by the throat. I remember it well and could go to the spot. . . . There rushed over me a stream as of fire. I shook black fear from me forever. I was strong, of unknown strength. . . . I there and then began to be a man." Afterwards in a letter to a

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<sup>2</sup>"Reformation," Lindsey, p, 97. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

<sup>3</sup>"Life," Villari, Chapter I. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

<sup>4</sup>Book II, Chapter VII.



friend he said: "From that time I date my 'new birth.'<sup>5</sup> Blame not the word (conversion), rather rejoice that such a word, signifying such a thing, has come to light in our Modern Era, although long hidden from the wisest ancients. The old world knew nothing of conversion. It was a new-attained progress in the moral development of man; hereby has the Highest come home to the bosoms of the most limited. What to Plato was but a hallucination and to Socrates a chimera is now clear and certain to your Zinzendorfs and your Wesleys and the poorest of your Pietists and your Methodists."<sup>6</sup> When it is remembered how little attention has been given to our Lord's teachings concerning this great doctrine, is there any wonder that the progress of the kingdom of heaven lagged and religion lost its power?

Not until the rise of modern evangelism was conversion considered really an essential to salvation, and in the matter of religion the subject was largely overlooked. While traveling for his health in France and Switzerland, John Fletcher found great crowds assemble nightly for the discussion of topics of religious importance. On one occasion he inquired of the pastor if he ever had any conversions on such occasions. The pastor looked puzzled, and, on being informed what was meant, said: "We do not live in the age of miracles." Yet this same kind of "miracle" was a common occurrence in Mr. Fletcher's Madely congregation in England (1785) and was stirring the English-speaking people to their depths

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<sup>5</sup>"Life," by Froude, Chapter VII. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

<sup>6</sup>"Sartor Resartus," Book II, Chapter X.



on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. If conversion be classed as a miracle, then the age of miracles had but begun; for under the preaching of such men as George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, and others such wonders were of daily occurrence in various lands. But prior to that age personal religion was not stressed, the sacramental feature of religion was depended upon, and the knowledge of sins forgiven was a fact largely neglected. It is a paradox of religious history that the author of the greatest book of the eighteenth century written in defense of revealed religion, Joseph Butler, came to the dying bed without a sense of his acceptance with God. Calling his chaplain to his bedside, he said: "Though I have endeavored to avoid sin and to please God to the utmost of my ability, yet, from a consciousness of perpetual infirmities, I am still afraid to die." "My lord," said the chaplain, "have you forgotten that Jesus is a Saviour?" "True," was the answer; "but how may I know that he is my Saviour?" "My lord, it is written, 'He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.'" "True," said the bishop; "and though I have read the Scriptures a thousand times, I have never felt its virtue till this moment; and now I die happy." That was in the year 1752, and about the same time Whitefield was swinging up and down the Atlantic seaboard in America, creating a great sensation by his wonderful sermons, in which the main features were conversion and a sense of acceptance with God. This gospel was preached to the frontiersmen, who received it gladly as the gift of God.

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<sup>7</sup>"Life," Mangus, p. xii. (Religious Tract Society, London.)

A light is thrown on the religious condition of those times by the fact that Gilbert Tennent created considerable excitement by preaching and printing his "Nottingham Sermon" on the "Danger of an Unconverted Ministry."<sup>8</sup> Tennent was one of Mr. Whitefield's followers, and delivered his great sermon before the Synod of Philadelphia in 1740, which shows the prevalent neglect of the ministry to know and declare the greatest of the doctrines of Christianity as taught by Christ himself.

Of the distressing religious conditions in England of those times, Warburton wrote: "I have lived to see the fatal crisis when religion has lost its vital hold upon the minds of the people." Mr. Wesley spoke of the Church of those times as "having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." In 1736 Bishop Joseph Butler wrote: "It has come, I know not how, to be taken for granted that Christianity is no longer so much as a subject of inquiry, and that it is at length discovered to be fictitious, and nothing remains but to set it up as a principal subject of ridicule, by way of reprisal for having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world."<sup>9</sup> In certain centers of thought all this doubtless was true, but how little did these great thinkers realize what God was doing beyond the radius of their soul dearth! At that particular time the Spirit of God was stirring beneath the surface like the sputterings of a mighty volcano ready to burst forth in world-redeeming power. In the same year, 1736, the "Holy

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<sup>8</sup>"American Christianity," Bacon, p. 167. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

<sup>9</sup>"Life," Mangus, p. ix. (Religious Tract Society, London.)

Club" was organized among the students at Oxford, which resulted in the "United Societies," which have encircled the globe and swept millions into the kingdom of heaven on the waves of vital godliness.

That religion of which Warburton spoke as "having lost its vital hold upon the minds of the people" was a religion without conversion, without holy living, and without the sense of the divine presence. Without these, what religion can live in the world at any time? The men who saved the day in those dark days did so by appealing not to men's intellects, but to their hearts. It was the declaration of a gospel of new life that fired evangelism and sent the gospel of Christ ringing down the centuries as the salvation of mankind and the hope of the world. For well-nigh a century and a half it has dominated the North American Continent, if not indeed the English-speaking world. Nor has it lost its power in these later times, as can be testified to by millions of souls all around the earth.

The last fifty years have been made quite distinctive by the great revival waves which have characterized it. "Not often has the world witnessed," said Dr. Dale, "such a transformation in so short a while as came over England and Scotland on the visit of Mr. Moody and Mr. Sankey in 1875 and 1876, by which, declares Dr. George Adam Smith, 'our people were stirred as they have not been since the days of Whitefield and Wesley.'" The sainted Dr. Dale, of Birmingham, **was** less likely to be swept off his feet by the great wave, so we shall let him tell the wonderful story: "I had seen occasional instances before of instant transition from religious anxiety

to the clear and triumphant consciousness of restoration to God; but what struck me in the gallery of Bingly Hall was the fact that this instant transition took place with nearly every person with whom I talked. They came up into the inquiry room anxious, restless, feeling after God in the darkness; and when, after a few moments of conversation, they went away their faces were filled with light, and they left me not only at peace with God, but filled with joy.”<sup>10</sup>

Such scenes, while not so extensive, have been experienced in America, in Wales, and more recently in China and Korea. These great revival waves, the atmosphere of sudden conversions, are in their very nature transitory and supernormal as an experience. The one thing of importance is that which is of permanent value in its results, that which remains after the revivals are gone. That many do lose the effect of the great revival and bring conversion into disrespect is sadly too true, giving occasion for those little jibes such as Matthew Arnold indulged in at the expense of the Cornish revivals in England, when he said: “They will have no difficulty in tasting, seeing, hearing, and feeling God twenty times every night, and be none the better for it to-morrow.” Yet this same Cornish miner’s faith had made him a new man, the secret of which was developed by a traveler, Mr. Augustine Birrell, who said to one of the Cornish miners: “You seem to be a very temperate people here; how did it happen?” The miner replied, lifting his cap solemnly: “There came a man amongst us once; his name was John

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<sup>10</sup>*The Congregationalist*, March, 1875.



Wesley." The revival and conversion had made that a new country.

The fact to be considered is not how many lose the effect of conversion. "Men lapse from every level; we need no statistics to tell us that." To fall is man's misfortune, and due to his natural weakness. We should consider the heights to which he is raised, and what would be his condition had he never been lifted up by divine grace. Though the percentage of breakdowns was much larger than it is, we should be without excuse for dismissing the subject of conversion with a smile. It is the uplift rather than the breakdown that is of significance, for in this we get the true measure of the divine force at work in human life for its redemption. Out of the great revivals have come millions of Christianity's very best recruits and strongest defenders. The experience of conversion has been testified to by countless throngs of civilized men and women in all ages of the Christian era. Nor has the marvelous work of grace ceased. The experience which is writ large in the New Testament and in the lives of sixty generations is still being repeated in our midst. "Our witnesses are not of yesterday, but of to-day. Our data are not fossils from the past, but are facts of the present, warm, fresh, and living." "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

Instantaneous conversion is a fact of religious history; and what is more sacred than a fact which has to do with the soul's welfare? The sacredness of any fact is perhaps the supreme lesson which science has impressed upon the present generation, and at last even science is beginning to learn its



own lesson and to recognize that religion also has its facts, and that the thrilling consciousness of God's immediate forgiveness and fellowship with Christ are facts which thrust themselves upon us and command attention.

That so great a work of grace should meet with opposition or be discredited would seem incredible, if it were not a recognized fact. There are those who do not believe in sudden conversion, but think this altogether a hallucination and made up of animal excitement, leading only to evil. But these are *ex-parte* testimonials which speak without actual knowledge or experience of religion. "Let a man get converted and he will need no further proof, or he will have the only kind of explanation that is worth considering." When one falls back on his spiritual consciousness and says, "Whereas I was blind, now I see," argument is powerless to dislodge him. He has the witness in himself.

### 3. THE GRADUAL CONVERSION

While the facts of instantaneous conversion are abundant and beyond dispute, equally strong is the evidence for gradual conversion. Even though it is a fact that most of the first Christians were brought to Christ by sudden conversion, this is by no means to be taken as the "Scriptural method" of becoming a Christian. It is rather unfortunate that the conversion of St. Paul has been taken as an ideal one. That was strictly in keeping with the character and history of the man, and has been duplicated on rare occasions. Many a soul has been disappointed in not experiencing a "Pauline conversion." While the

Bible gives the account of many blessed conversions that were not "Pauline," these have been overlooked; yet we dare not discredit their genuineness. They too were Biblical and led to ideal religious living.

The character of a conversion depends largely upon the circumstances—the presentation or the temperament of the convert. The history of almost any local church would show that nearly all of its early members became Christians through sudden conversion; yet this was due to the novelty of evangelism which but recently gave them the gospel message, and to the earnest and impassionate appeal which brought them to the serious consideration of religion. Then the matter of temperament enters largely into our religious experience. By no means are all men highly emotional or easily moved by direct religious appeal. Nor can the spectacular conversion lay claim to the exclusive manifestation of the power of God to save souls. As the work of evangelical Christianity has become better established, the Bible better understood, and the laws of human personality better recognized, men have come to trust their own calmer reason rather than their emotions in matters of religion. Furthermore, thinking people have come to realize that while religion is wrapped in a halo of mystery it is in its methods a reasonable something. The gospel of redemption has been reduced more nearly to scientific expression; and as we have learned what repentance, faith, and redemption mean, we have come to remember that while God may awaken a sleeper by a vivid flash of lightning, he awakens

all the earth's vital forces by a steady glow of sunlight. The God who in Elijah's day was not in the storm or the whirlwind, but in "the still small voice," is to-day at work everywhere in the same quiet manner, hence the deep, still workings of the Holy Spirit always.

The great awakenings and stirring religious occasions which have figured so prominently in our religious history in modern times were, in a measure, a necessity. Many of the Church constituency were pioneers who bravely took their families to the frontier in forest and plain. These were from pious homes, and were themselves of strong religious tendencies. They with their families gladly welcomed the great revival as their only public means of grace. Then preachers and religious teachers were few and churches not yet built. The home training of youths was neglected, and men and women grew up without religion; however, they were not skeptics, but brave-hearted, unconverted men and women with strong religious instincts who greeted gladly any occasion to come together in a community way. But these same epoch-making revivals were necessarily transitory. The demands disappeared, and they died out. But while they lasted the "old-time revivals" were wonderful instruments in the hands of God in arresting the unsaved, melting down the hardest sinner, and converting the most obstinate soul. But, in their very origin and method, did they not argue the neglect of the essential work of Christianity, and would not their continuance have been to encourage and prolong that same neglect? In place of fully nurturing souls for Christ, undue dependence was

put in the "revival meeting" to get men saved and to build up the kingdom of heaven. Then, too often, the joy of *service* was forgotten in the rapture of the rich religious experience. In the circle of immediate rejoicing the great far-off unsaved world was overlooked.

It must be admitted that the "old-time revival shout" was as fine an ecstasy as ever swept a prophet's soul. Its like has not been known apart from a religious realization of the divine soul filling. Yet it was egoistic; it had to do too much with the individual soul, and not enough with the great outer world for which Christ died; and after the work meant to be accomplished was done, that type of religious manifestation passed, as it was destined to do. It is a fact of history that religious ecstasy has grown less as civilization and culture have advanced. It was so in the days of the prophets, in the middle ages, and in the more recent past. We may expect the same to happen with us. The moving of the Spirit in powerful and instantaneous salvation seems to have claimed an age and workers all its own. Of this and its results Thomas Chalmers had the following to say: "When we look at the greatness of the achievement wrought by men who had just emerged from grossest barbarism; when we think of the change they wrought in materials so crude and uncompromising; when we see how they have relieved the grim solitude of the desert, and witness the love and listen to the piety of reclaimed savages—who would not long to be in possession of the charm by which they have wrought the wonderful trans-



formations? Who would not exchange for it all the paraphernalia of polished eloquence?"

As the laws of gospel propagation have come to be better understood and put into practice, and the value of a quiet conversion to be appreciated, men are coming more and more to surrender themselves to Christ in the moments of quiet deliberation. After this fashion large numbers are coming into the Church in all countries. They may not have so thrilling an experience, and outwardly may not seem to rejoice as much as did the participants in the "old-time religion," but who will say that their quiet joy is not deeper in its channel, of a steadier flow, and their fidelity to the Lord not of the firmer and more abiding type?

While the ability to name the occasion and the very hour of conversion has been a source of great comfort to many and a refuge in an hour of doubt—and the lack of this special privilege a grief to others, as if they had missed something out of their experience—yet not even this is an essential in religion. Not the manner but the fact of conversion is the needful something. No one-way rule can be laid down for all the world. To demand conversion after a manner not possible to some would be to shut them out of the kingdom of God. Some of the most triumphant Christians and most successful workers in saving souls have not been able to tell when they became Christians. They know that they are the children of God, and that is enough. Not even the great Jonathan Edwards could remember the day when he did not love God as his Heavenly Father. Thus it has been with many who have gone



on trusting God, gladly rendering him a life service of love. They have never felt the need of anything besides the vital allegiance of themselves to God and a whole-hearted enlistment in his services. From this has come a sweet sense of peace, indicating a vital soul harmony with God, which is redemption and real religion. While such persons may not be able to tell the golden moment when such a life began any more than they could tell just when the dawn began, they know that they walk in the full glow of a beautiful day, satisfied and saved, "all canopied with light." They have received "life from above" which makes their religion dynamic and a precious reality.

Yet is it not a fact that many of God's redeemed children have never known this great and high experience? They have an equal right with others to the Tree of Life whose fruits are their heritage, but still they grope and lag, and are religiously defeated and deprived of that which is theirs. May we not discover the secret of this defeat, and be ourselves benefited by the discovery? Our next chapter will serve us as a light tower to guide to fairer seas.

CHAPTER X  
THE SUPERNATURAL IN OUR RELIGION

"No other miracle," says Fitchett, "is equal to that which changes the human soul, as the apostles themselves were visibly transfigured men. The cowards who had forsaken their Master, fleeing for their lives and surrendering him to the Cross, are now lifted up to a mood which shrinks from no peril, which has in it a note of triumphant victory.

"Their spokesman is the man who has thrice denied his Master, when he had fallen into the hands of the enemy, and he now frames against his countrymen the most terrific of all indictments: 'By wicked hands they have crucified and slain God's messenger, the hope of the race. . . . Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this Jesus whom you have crucified both Lord and Master'—words of a sermon which has stood the test for two thousand years." —"*Where Higher Criticism Fails*," Fitchett (*Methodist Book Concern*).

## CHAPTER X

### THE SUPERNATURAL IN OUR RELIGION

THE relentless strife between "science and religion" is due not so much to the lack of agreement on material facts (for in this realm there is little dissension), but the issue between them is this: *Shall the presence of God be recognized in the government of the world and the experience of men?* For the last fifty years in scientific circles there had been an admitted cleavage of thought just here. In his Presidential Address, in 1877, Mr. Tyndall, in discussing "Science and Man," said: "There is on every hand a growing repugnance to invoking the supernatural in accounting for the phenomena of human life; and the thoughtful minds just referred to [the scientists], finding no trace of evidence in favor of any other origin, are driven to seek in the interaction of social forces the genesis and development of man's moral nature."<sup>1</sup> At the present day the origin of the human soul is sought in the same "interaction of social forces."

Now, it must be admitted that Mr. Tyndall is the apostle of modern science. Rarely do we find a "scientist" who does not walk in his footsteps; and in all the wonders of scientific work there is a decided Tyndall glow. Take, for example, his theory of the origin of the universe: "I hold the nebular theory as it was held by Kant, Laplace, and Herschel,

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<sup>1</sup>"Fragments of Science," p. 625. (D. Appleton Co.)

and as it is held by the best scientific intellects of to-day. According to that theory, our sun and planets were once diffused throughout space as an impalpable haze, out of which, by condensation, came the solar system. What caused the haze to condense? Loss of heat. What rounded the sun and planets? That which rounds a tear—molecular force. . . . Was life implicated in the nebula, a part of it; or was it of a vaster and wholly Unfathomable Life? Or was it the work of a Being, standing outside of the nebula, who fashioned it, but whose own origin and ways are past finding out?" "As far as the eye of science has hitherto ranged through nature, no intrusion of purely creative power into any phenomena has ever been observed. . . . Such an intrusion is opposed to the spirit of science."<sup>2</sup> Beyond this science has not gone even to our day.

Here we have the whole story in a word. Along these lines "modern science," with all its literature on the evolutionary theory of the origin and perfection of life, has been evolved. "Strip it naked," says Tyndall, "and you stand face to face with the notion that in that nebula were not only more ignoble forms of molecular and animal life, but the more wonderful mechanism of the human body—emotions, intellect, will, and all their phenomena—were latent in that fiery cloud. . . . All our philosophy, all our poetry, all our science, and all our arts—Plato, Shakespeare, Newton, and Raphael—are potential in the fires of the sun."<sup>3</sup>

Now, what was it that the "defenders of the faith"

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<sup>2</sup>"Fragments of Science," p. 500, 6th ed. (D. Appleton Co.)

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 440.



saw, and still see, in this wonderful *dream* to cause them to enter such a storm of protest and keep the battle raging? They plainly saw the reappearing of two old foes of the faith, Pantheism and Fatalism, dressed up in scientific garb, which "shut God out of the world." "Science" conceives of the universe in the beginning as a vast machine thought out, adjusted, and so charged with energy as to need only a start to continue evolving from nebulous embryo all God's infinite designs, including all we know to-day—all myriad forms of life, even to the intellect and immortal soul of man.

Of this materialistic, fixed conception of God's way with the world—a mere guess—the Christian philosophers have rightly been extremely shy. They have felt (1) that it put God at too great a distance from the world—a billion or two years in point of time; (2) it deprived the human race of its cherished glory—namely, man's prerogative of shaping his own destiny; (3) it cuts man out of soul fellowship with his Maker. Yet in these very facts lie the source and secret of all moral and religious life; and any theory of the universe which ignores these is manifestly false to God and to man. And our predecessors were wise in their foreboding, as has been shown by the life and character of many eminent evolutionists.

There have been in this school many eminently pious and good men, such as Henry Drummond, John Fiske, Rudolf Eucken, and others. This we all readily admit; but what are the broad facts in the religious history of modern scientists? Is not the general trend of materialistic science away from,

and not toward, the recognition of the supremacy of a personal God in nature, especially in human affairs? Do we not find certain scientists saying, "We find no use for God"? Was not Thomas Huxley himself accused of being religiously "as cold as an iceberg"? Did not Mr. Darwin, who was "intended for the Church," become dry in soul and lose all spiritual emotions? Is not the set of the scientific sail in the direction of *agnosticism*, whose platform is, "If there is a God, I do not know him, and there is no means by which I can find him out." This philosophy in Germany produced such men as Schopenhauer and his atheistic pupil Von Neitzsche, the Darwin of the Teutons and apostle of the teachings which produced the atmosphere in which were forged the weapons of the most cruel war that ever cursed the earth. The religious character of such men is known to all the world.

### THE ANTICHRIST SPIRIT

If the influence of such "science" is not pernicious and detrimental to vital godliness, why is it that so many of that school are, if not bitter enemies, thoroughly indifferent to the things of Christ, rarely speak respectfully of our Lord, and want to "break the bondage of consecrated obligations"?<sup>4</sup> Why is it that sixty per cent of the university teachers of America—our boasted Christian land—class themselves as either atheists, agnostics, or indifferent to the idea of personal immortality? Have they not been "scientifically" trained?

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<sup>4</sup>"Mind in the Making," James Harvey Robison. (Harper Bros.)

The trouble with this entire school, both in science and religion, sifts itself down to a disbelief in the immediate Divine oversight in nature or the consciousness of God's presence in the soul in religion. They reason thus: If God started the "evolving" infinite ages ago, in an unerring process which has not and cannot fail to do his will, where is the further need of his presence? This *force* is still at work in our religion, as everywhere else, pushing us on to some far-off æon or state of perfection. This is sufficient; why ask for more? Why the need for God at the beginning of our religious experience—regeneration—or at any other stage of our religious life-struggle? The impersonal force inherent in the soul, says the scientist, is sufficient for this great work; why call in a mysterious Force to aid in what man can do of himself? "Religion is, indeed, our own affair,"<sup>5</sup> says Harvard's professor of philosophy, as contrasted with the idea of religious insight being a revelation.

Here is the source of all our godless, man-made religion, the bane of the age and cause of much religious defeat. In any age the tendency of this impersonal-God idea always has been to chill the lifeblood of religion and lead men into grievous errors.

#### ELIMINATING THE DIVINE

It is amazing to what extent our American Christianity is cast into the mold of the human-sufficiency religion. Its tenets are something like these: Man is naturally not a very bad creature, is not depraved

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<sup>5</sup>"Source of Religious Insight," Royce, p. 32. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

“with a tendency to evil as the sparks to fly upward”; children do not need redemption through Christ, but they need only good environment and Christian nurture to grow into saints eventually; prayer is only for the morale of him who prays, and not to bring God’s power into play in human life; revivals are purely human institutions, projected by human ingenuity and accomplished by human skill; salvation is living the successful life, and not a matter of soul redemption; the holy life is achieved purely by human persistence and will, not by God’s help. Man works out his own salvation; there is no God working within him to will and to do of God’s good pleasure. Whatever man is, he is wholly “self-made.”

All this is Unitarianism—modern Socinianism—pure and simple, which repudiates the blood of Christ, “shed for many for the remission of sins,” which denies the Virgin Birth and divinity of our Lord, except as all men have a dash of the divine in them. This same cult would eliminate all miracles from the life of Christ even to his bodily resurrection, as Thomas Jefferson cut them all out of his Latin-Greek-French-English New Testament, leaving only what he called the “Morals of Jesus.” This Antichrist creeps into prominence on all occasions, in university lectures, in pretentious volumes given as premiums for subscriptions to periodicals. It slips into our orthodox *Reviews* under the guise of a review of the Life of Emerson. But worst of all, it gets nationwide publicity by some religious “wanderer” posing as a martyr to freedom of speech as against the tyranny of orthodoxy.



### A SENSE OF LONENESS

One reads such literature and hears such speeches with a shudder of loneliness. Left to himself, with no polarity of soul for God, no proffer of divine grace, no guidance of the Holy Spirit, one is terrified by a relentless heart hunger and feels as if lost in vastness with no beckoning hand to guide to safety. This chilling sense steals over his soul and defeats his every effort. If he be a preacher, he is not *called of God* to the great work, but only "*decided* to abandon the law for the ministry." What enthusiasm has he in any enterprise beyond individual success? It is all human at best, originated in the intellect of man and projected by human skill.

Yet this is the philosophy that is invading the kingdom of heaven to-day; this is the armor-clad foe with all the prestige of "science," that would shut God out from his own and leave man to grope in spiritual night.

"Science only discovers God's method of doing his work and thereby manifesting himself," says one. "Some souls are greatly blessed by this way of conceiving of God. Some 'modernists' are deeply pious and evangelical. They love God and want to do his will."

But before this philosophy shall become satisfactory to the religious mind it must get beyond the conception of God as an absent deity working by fixed, fatalistic laws, implied in the scientific theory of world construction, and its corollary, "the survival of the fittest," that cruelist of all theories of life. Then it must bring man a spiritual Father-God, imminent in nature and identifying himself in



all the sequences of human life. Till this is done "science" stands at the judgment bar of humanity "weighed and found wanting." "A tree is known by its fruits," and observation has shown that present-day science does not contribute to personal piety.

The fact might as well be admitted that the age is in the grasp of a power which does not make for godliness, and its Antichrist spirit is telling upon the times. Ours is quite a different world from that which our fathers bequeathed to us fifty years ago. Then the American continent had been under the dominance of evangelism for well-nigh a century. Christian character was at the summit of things, honor was first, marriage was sacred, home ties were sweet, prayer was the power house of proficiency, the Bible the foundation of civilization, and God was supreme. Then home was the citadel of the nation; but what have we now?

It has been said that the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species by Natural Selection" marked the beginning of a new era in the world's thought. Why? Because it and the "Descent of Man," by their very novelty, caught the popular ear and started a wave in the direction of an agnostic "science." It has not established man's kinship to the monkey; but by many the Bible is sneered at, religion has become godless, and Christianity has been embalmed and placed upon the shelf as a mummy of a discarded belief. And this to-day is the attitude of much that is labeled "science"—nebulous and hypothetical in the extreme, as it may be. Mr. Tyndall said of Mr. Darwin, during his lifetime, that "he drew

heavily upon the scientific tolerance of his age";<sup>6</sup> and Mr. Ladd, of Yale, said that "no reputable scientist would class himself as a Darwinite in science"—and this when his theory was at the zenith of popular approval. And the same verdict is issued by the real scientists to-day. Yet this is the "science" which has captured the age and gets the applause while religion gets the hiss; and in the universities our young men are told: "If you find your science and religion in conflict, throw away your religion." Such men are allowed to attack religion at will under the claims of "science"; but let a preacher dare draw attention to the godlessness of science, and at once he is dubbed as of the "laity," meaning the uninitiated, the uncouth, and the ignorant.

#### THE "PSYCHOLOGY" OF RELIGION

Religion suffers no little by getting into the hands of this class of "scientifically" trained minds. They proceed upon the hypothesis that religion has no mystery; that, in keeping with all things under heaven, it too is subject to materialistic analysis. Men talk about the "rationale of conversion," and want to set forth the "mode and tenses" of the great phenomenon. They want to explain the varied feature of religious experience by determining the "psychological idiosyncrasies" of the individual. But when all this has been accomplished, what have we gained? How much nearer are we to the depths of the mystery of God's dealings with man? We may see the results of what has happened to man in the great work of regeneration, but who can tell

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<sup>6</sup>"Fragments of Science," p. 437. (D. Appleton Co.)

whence the wind cometh or whither it goeth?  
"So is every one that is born of the Spirit."

God has at no time alienated himself from the souls of men, or from any part of his creation. The great work of cleansing and fitting the soul for his indwelling is altogether his, and it is presumption for anyone to think it otherwise. Hence we must hold that a greater than human power is essential to the moral transformation of man, as well as to the victorious struggles of all subsequent religious life. Here we meet with one of the inscrutable mysteries of God; the work is his by whatever way he may desire to accomplish his will.

#### CHARLES G. FINNEY REVIEWED

No one familiar with the character of Charles G. Finney, wonderful revivalist that he was, can doubt his sincerity; but we must question the correctness of his opinion when he says: "There is no miracle in a revival. There might be a miracle among the antecedent causes, or there might not. The apostles employed miracles simply as a means to arrest attention to their message and establish its Divine authority; but the miracle was not the revival or its origin." Now, the force of this statement depends entirely upon what is meant by "miracle." If there is meant such abnormal phenomena as were witnessed by Saul of Tarsus on his way to Damascus, then Dr. Finney's opinion may be accepted. But if he means that a revival is altogether a human work which may be accomplished by "claptrap machinery," that souls may be "born again," sin mightily uprooted, and character made anew with-

out the aid of the divine intervention, then he is wrong. There has never yet been a genuine revival that was not the result of serious prayers, and those prayers have always been for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the manifestation of God's soul-saving power. Wherever this Power is manifest and souls are saved, whether in a spectacular manner or otherwise, there a "miracle" has been performed, a work has been accomplished which God alone can do, and which he has never delegated to anyone else or to any sort of machinery whatever. This is in direct harmony with all Bible and Christian teaching. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." From the day of Pentecost till the present time there has never been a soul-stirring, far-reaching revival that did not stand in proof of this statement. Genuine conversion is of God. The recognition of this fact gave evangelism prestige and power everywhere and made conversion to be most real. Just this faith reinstated, this trusting in God to accomplish the soul transformation and give the victory, is what the world needs most in this age of the seeming disappearance of genuine conversion and dynamic religion. It would be wisdom to recognize this fact. To-day we have what men call "great meetings." Vast crowds assemble and masterful sermons are preached. The music is inspiring and an interest is aroused. Souls give themselves to the cause of Christ in great numbers; and who dare say that they are not sincere? But the old-time power seems lacking. The agony for "power from above" is unknown, hence is not realized in great measure.



Philosophize, analyze, and classify as we may, but the *power is of God*.

Professor James's great book, "Varieties of Religious Experience," holds a unique position in religious literature. Dr. John Watson called it the "most scientific book on religious consciousness yet published." Yet George Jackson, in his Cole Lectures, points out the fact that "he does not deal with religious experience at all." Says he: "A man may fill reams of paper discussing the emotional factors which combine to make possible the experience of St. Paul on the Damascus road; but if he ignores the central fact of divine forgiveness and fellowship, which became the strength of the apostle's life and the source of his activities, he has left out the only element to which a Christian would give the name of 'religion' at all. With all his cleverness, it must be confessed, this is exactly what Professor James has done."<sup>7</sup>

#### WHERE THE LIGHT FAILS

May it not be possible to trace much of the impotency of our present-day religion, of which so many complain, to this one source, of which Mr. James stands accused? Many men, by giving their attention to the "psychology" of religious experience and God's "method" of dealing with the human soul, have missed the dynamics of it all. While trying to reduce religion to the level of scientific inquiry, they have not realized the mystery of godliness and have not found the secret of power. Men

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<sup>7</sup>"Fact of Conversion," pp. 187, 188. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)



of materialistic training have been trying to reduce all life to the level of materialistic laws when religion belongs high above all such commonplace things. By the human intellect and mechanical means men have been trying to solve the problems of spiritual life, but have failed, and the world is feeling the awful effect of their failure. Can it be possible that we have not divined the secret of that failure? We cannot reduce to dead formula the deep workings of the Spirit. God will not be bound by such mechanical rules. He deals with each individual soul according to the variations of that particular life; and his ways are past finding out. Our Saviour gave us a hint of this by his reference to the coming and going of the wind. By eliminating all the immediate workings of the Spirit and reducing religion to a scientific formula, forgetting the divine element, men may have the form of godliness, but not the power; and that means a religion without holy fire and enthusiasm, without the sublime daring of the cross. Such a soulless religion without Holy Ghost power and heroic daring is not the kind of religion Jesus bequeathed to a needy world, nor is it the kind of religion to redeem and uplift our troubled age. The records show that this "naturalized" religion has not made history by turning the world upside down.

#### THE RELIGION WHICH SAVED ENGLAND

If it be true, as Mr. Lecky says, that England was saved the horrors of French Revolution during the reign of George II by the religious revolution which a short while before was begun by the preaching of

the evangelists, may we not ask how this was accomplished? Surely not by appealing to the intellect of England or her patriotism. Her intellect was never finer. Those were the days of Hume and Bolingbroke, of Addison and Johnson, Pitt and Burke, Newton and Clive. These were all stars of the first magnitude. Yet Mr. Wesley did not call upon them for an instant. Nay, he labored on often in the face of their scorn and discouragement. He and his army of "lay preachers" went into every corner of the kingdom proclaiming man's fallen nature and need of regeneration, together with the infinite goodness and love of God, conversion and holy living. What followed is known to all the world.

The hope of humanity then, as now, lies in the great statement of the Redeemer, "Ye must be born again," must have new life from above. How else can we explain the fact that some of the greatest men in the world's history have stepped suddenly out of a state of darkness, uncertainty, and sin into the realm of certainty, freedom, and gladness? Mr. Fitchett points out that Bishop Paley has built up on the conversion of St. Paul an almost matchless demonstration of the truths of Christianity itself.

The moral transformation of a strong and passionate soul, suddenly and permanently changed, is one of the most indisputable and remarkable facts of history. To transform a zealot at a breath into a saint, a persecutor of Christianity into an avowed apostle and martyr for the truths of Christianity—this is truly a *miracle*. An event so amazing must

have behind it a producing power no less wonderful than the results achieved.

A "definite experience" is the dividing line in the life of such men. On one side are to be found struggling, doubt, toiling, and failure; while on the other side are certainty, gladness, power, and achievement. Something has happened in the supreme moment, and that something was their *conversion*, their coming into right relations to God, that exalted state held out to us in the gospel. This coming of the soul to its own in redemption is no doubt the answer to man's soul-longing for freedom, life, dominion, and fellowship with the divine. "Fellowship, heirship, sonship—these are terms which abound in the New Testament," says Bishop Lambuth; "but we have failed to catch the ring and measure of their significance—enlarged life, divine heritage, noble companionship—a share as coworkers with God in his redemptive scheme. When a man's nature undergoes redemption, his transformed soul is illumined and coupled with divine energy. It is a rediscovery of man's destined sphere and a renewed emphasis of his work. He enters the workshop as a child; he goes out as a master workman, and he too becomes a world builder."<sup>8</sup>

### PERMANENT RESULTS

Besides this, what are some of the permanent benefits of the process of soul-renewal? (1) The living Christ is received as a personal Saviour, and the sublime ideals of redemption as they exist in the

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<sup>8</sup>"Winning the World for Christ," p. 22. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)

mind of God are fulfilled in human life. (2) The aroused moral nature receives renewed energy, and with an awakened will bounds forward in glad obedience. (3) A new affection is begotten, so the good which was once hated is loved and the evil once enjoyed is abhorred. (4) Having heard the call of the true Leader, the soul issues a declaration of spiritual independence. The clear testimony is, "Whereas I was blind, now I see"; and while the soul's struggles are not entirely past, the day of conversion is the day of religious emancipation and the beginning of a new era—a life thrilled with the assurance of a final victory. (5) To the newborn soul the sky is radiant with hope, and he is a rightful optimist in all life's issues, because the forces which make for triumph are his. This assurance becomes to him an "inward witness" and an increasing joy.

Such a spiritual dynamic is the secret of progress in all true human development. It is God's approach to redeemed human nature, by which he makes his grace available to needy mankind, filling the limited with the unlimited, so that the converted soul plus the power at his command is more than human. It has ever been the divine in the human which has made it truly heroic. Since the beginning of history this has been a recognized fact in religious annals. All well-poised souls have felt it and have given testimony to the fact. God is at work within, enabling mankind "to will and to do of his good pleasure." While struggling alone the tide may be too much for man and may bear him down, till he reaches up and grasps the proffered hand. With this aid he rises above the tide, evil tendencies are overcome,



and the seemingly impossible happens. Duties which once seemed irksome, if not beyond human attainment, not only become possible, but a real delight.

Such a consciousness of life and power and love is ample to sustain one in all the mazes of this present life and land him safe in the paradise of God. Such a blessed frame of mind and communion with God make life real, having that complement of grace which saves to the uttermost and brings man to the completion of his being. This is the secret back of God's revelation of himself in Christ Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as the explanation of the Cross as the symbol of redeeming love standing upon the hilltop of human history. This redeemed life, made pure and sweet and beautiful, is the pathway wherein shine the footprints of Him who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," and in that path he calls us all to walk and live to the glory of God the Father. This is the full fruitage of God's great plan in the management of the destiny of man—though greatly marred by the careless handling of his soul liberty—the gracious forgiveness of sin, the gift of eternal life through the riches of grace in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The blessed benefits accruing from this "work of grace" in the soul of man and the divine fellowship attending it will be discussed in the next chapter, which beckons our approach by the topic, "God with Us: The Reality of the Divine Presence." To the consideration of this matchless theme we hasten on.





## CHAPTER XI

GOD WITH US: THE REALITY OF THE DIVINE  
PRESENCE

## THE CHRISTIAN GOD

Ours is not the God of materialistic science, hiding himself behind molecules of matter and manifesting himself only in electrons of force; but he is a God to whom his earthly children may lift up holy hands and cry for help, and whose presence they may have with them all the time, and whose everlasting arms they feel upholding them. This is our Father-God.

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"I have seen solitude, but never abandonment. However remote my path, there has always fared with me an unknown companion of unfailing goodness. He has been strong in the distress of life and patient and severe in the hour of carelessness. "Never have I fought a battle that he was not at my side. Into all life we go together. We were two who spoke in public, two who took counsel by the fireside. I have come to know him as another self, a good genius, a near and superior Spirit who untangles the perplexities in the essentials of life. He has shown me joys in bright days, in darkness has cheered my path. Wandering perplexed in the labyrinth of ideas and passion, I would see him near, and his glance would open the way."—"The Better Way," Wagner (McClure, Phillips and Co).

"The life of the Spirit," says Mitchell, "is a thirst for God. There is no other figure which so clearly presents that life as it must be to realize God. . . . Cold hearts never burn and never yearn. The promise is for men who must have God or die from desire of him."—"Elements of Personal Christianity" (Methodist Book Concern).

## CHAPTER XI

### GOD WITH US: THE REALITY OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE

THE sense of the divine presence is an essential in religion, and should be sought not simply as a religious luxury or ambitious spiritual attainment, but as an experience of real religion. It is to the soul what health is to the body, a sign that all is well and the laws of religion are being obeyed. That God might thus come into conscious relation to man, and that man might be blessed with the divine indwelling, was the purpose of man's creation and the gift of his religious nature.

Man in his station is the explanation of creation. He is the keystone of creation's arch, the completion of all, and that to which all else is contributory. Without man to interpret and to utilize, much of creation would remain a mystery. How explain, without him, the existence of minerals, of forests, and of precious gems? Without a hand to polish, what were the purpose of the flashing diamond? Without man's genius to correlate and interpret, and his science to construct and direct nature's forces, how explain their creation or purpose in the world? From whatever standpoint the history of creation may be approached, it will appear that the later advent of man on the earth was not an afterthought with God, but a divinely delayed event till his plans were complete and the earth were ready for its il-

lustrious guest. Without man on board the world would be a ship of mystery; but with him there all is well.

Now, just as the material creation waited for a greater than itself to interpret and guide, so the powers of man—his reason, intellect, affections, and will—wait like a ship in port for the touch of a Pilot's hand. Man's conditions all demand this. Hence his sense of limitations, his thirst for knowledge, his instincts of futurity, and his upward look (*ἀνθρώπος*) all intimate a needed element in his nature, without which he could never rest at ease or reach conscious perfection, or find the solution of life's problems. View man as we may, the *finale* in his nature has been held up for future and ultimate acts of God. As the diamond waits for polishing or steel waits for its electric charge to receive its magnetic polarity, so the soul of man waits for the magic touch of Spirit to complete its perfection. This completion comes not from the acquisition of temporal things, such as pampering the body with wealth, surfeiting the mind with culture, or feasting the soul on the beauties of earth. Never till the divine plan is complete can man really know himself or find the goal of his rightful destiny.

Since the soul was made for religion, and since "religion is the life of God in the soul," then not till creation's plans are complied with is the soul complete, healthy, holy. All those spiritual desires which we are accustomed to speak of as soul needs (such as "heart hunger," the "soul reaching out after greater things") are our imperfect attempts to tell of humanity's age-long craving for that for which



it was created—namely, the indwelling presence of the Divine Spirit. Nothing is plainer than this. Man's instincts all point in that direction; his nature demands it; and the wretchedness attending a godless life lends its confirmation to this truth.

### GOD'S GRACIOUS PRESENCE

The idea of God's gracious presence with us is not fully met in the thought of God being present everywhere, in the air, in the sunshine, in gravitation, in all the forces of nature.

Surely God is externally present in all nature; for "in him we live, and move, and have our being," and without his upholding presence we should all immediately perish. But this sense of his presence does not meet spiritual needs. What the soul wants, and what we should seek after, is the consciousness of God with us in a religious sense. This is the burden of the Bible's teachings, and only this will suffice for the uplift of humanity. Yet this idea of God's presence with the human soul has not always been thought essential to the Christian life, hence the weakness of Christianity at times. The conception of God as an absent Ruler, an aristocratic Sovereign, governing the finished world by fixed laws, and miraculously breaking into human affairs at rare intervals—and his being represented by a vicegerent, with power to forgive or indulge sins—is not Christian and never did make for righteousness or satisfy the needy souls of men. Such a theology was born of paganism, fostered by class distinctions, and has been fruitful of untold errors and grievous iniquity to blacken the pages of religious history.

What the soul needs, and what our Saviour meant to establish on earth, was a domain of welcome in the heart of man for God, a consciousness of the Spirit's presence within, sustaining, comforting, and guiding the soul. This is what Christianity means and is seeking to establish in the earth. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," was the climactic declaration of the risen Lord; and his departure from earth was justified upon the grounds that he would send the "promised Comforter," to abide with men forever and guide them into all truth. This Comforter is the life and power of the Christian religion. He has access to the human heart in a manner not possible to the physical presence of our Lord himself.

Just this doctrine of the divine presence is the crux of the conflict between materialism and vital godliness. Spiritual facts are not discernible by laboratory methods, hence the lack of sympathetic knowledge on the part of lukewarm scientists in matters religious. They seem to take a pride in their ignorance of such things and think it not possible to find out God. They may be strictly within the limits of scientific knowledge and may correctly represent their cult; but they divulge a class secret in two directions: (1) They do not ring clear and true to their native instincts; and (2) they show that they have not discovered the real nature of religion. They may be versed in the technicalities of religion and be familiar with Church government and the rules of routine worship. Anyone who can read may know all this. But the deep secrets of Christian character and vital godliness are beyond the

range of the materialist's knowledge, hence his graceful silence on such subjects. An agnostic is an alien here, otherwise his self-chosen title were a misnomer. Personal piety and agnosticism are mutually preclusive terms. In the same company are to be classed all those who love darkness rather than light, for they know not the deep secrets of the Spirit and cannot speak the dialect of the kingdom.

### HAS GOD FORGOTTEN US?

There is a distressing religious condition abroad to-day, as many live their religion, that is causing alarm to serious-minded souls. They ask: "What is the matter with the world? Has God forgotten us, that we do not feel his presence as we once did?" This as a world condition is altogether man's fault and not God's, for God is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," and not a Being of capricious whims. The source of religious dearth, into which many obscuring elements enter, is entirely of human origin. Let us notice a few of these elements.

*The scientific method.* This has been a prolific agency in hiding God's face from us. An irreverent scientist is a most objectionable character religiously, especially when obsessed with scientific self-importance, thinking there is no truth but his, and the only way of finding the truth is by his materialistic method. This would coldly pry into all secrets, analyze all substances, and weigh all qualities. The brilliancy of the diamond is as nothing in the scientific laboratory. The gem must be reduced to its ultimate constituency, crushed to powder to determine its density and composition. The weird

enchantment of the mocking bird's music is ignored. The angelic spirit of the wood nymph flits away from beneath the dissecting knife of him who would discover the make of the vocal chords that could produce such music. The mystery and sacredness of life are forgotten by him who would set his camera to photograph the soul as it escapes from the body at death.

It is not science we are objecting to, but its materialistic methods. Do we not find Vergil long ago claiming that scientific knowledge of nature is not the only way of arriving at the truths of nature; that her loveliness is also a revelation; that the soul which is in unison with her is justified by its own peace? Science is schooling the world to want everything demonstrated to the eye, to be gazed at without thought. Nothing is more human and natural than this desire to see things. The craze for the spectacular is the cheapest kind of sensation, and the sensationalism has always been in inverse ratio to spirituality. When sensation rises religion lowers; yet the two are often confused. But religion is a thing of the spirit and not spectacular, not found in the latest "movie" thrill, but in soul communion with God. Here is discovered the difficulty in adapting Bible scenes to picture show use. They are rarely dramatic, and have in them little to foster modern sensationalism. They are mostly quiet life scenes embodying religious truths which bring God near.

This truth was brought to a crisis in the Congress of Religions in Chicago some years ago. One of the most eminent men of the South was solicited to



appear in the program to represent a branch of Protestant Christianity. This was thought complimentary, and the choice of the speaker was deemed excellent, as he was able to hold championship with any of the religions of the world. But when the time came for the great religious pageant one chair was empty. On that platform were long-bearded Magi, phylacteried Rabbis, sad-eyed Buddhists, and unmanicured Hindu priests. As the performance went forward bands deafened and drums thundered. Orators proclaimed their themes, to be applauded by their own constituency and by them alone. But no Atticus G. Haygood stood up to pantomime the Christian religion; and many were glad. Christianity does not shrink from comparison with other religions; but it is a spirit to be felt, *a life to be lived*, an intimate relation between the soul and God—not a thing to be visualized and gaped at with wonderment.

This spirit-deadening process is logical enough. The spectacular makes appeal to shallow, unthinking minds, and in no way encourages deep thinking or meditative moods. Besides, it is in direct line with the materialistic tendency of the times, all of which would hide God's face from us. Here we are dealing with conditions, not theories; and the materialistic tendency is a most potent condition, seen most plainly in the standard of values it sets up. That which cannot be weighed and measured or reduced to definite formula, or is not of present marketable value, is consigned to the junk heap. That which does not contribute to present pleasures or profit is not considered worth while. Among



such forgotten things are the unseen and the spiritual. Who to-day remembers St. Paul's great statement, "The things that are seen are temporal, while the things that are unseen are eternal"? Who seeks unseen soul qualities or truth for truth's sake? or counts material losses a blessing which may let God into the soul to reign there? The one chief aim to-day is not to discover the cause and purpose of pain, but to find an opiate for the pain and let the guilty "get by." The very providences which God meant as finger boards by the wayside to point the way of safety are made an occasion of soul confusion in the mad rush for material pleasures.

#### THE HEALTHY MAN'S RELIGION

Our age seems to have lost the sense of *spirituality* and has come to prefer the "healthy man's religion." This appeals to the most shallow mind, since it requires no serious thinking or high purpose in life. They of this faith are serene, are seldom sick, and have abundance of social pleasures. On them nature seems to smile benignly, since they have abundance of prosperity, friends are numerous, and business is good. What care they for more, or what better could they wish? All is well to-day; why care for the future or distress themselves over a lack of the divine presence? Does God not know all things, and is he not able to guide the world according to his liking? Surely he is a God of infinite goodness and mercy; and since he is a being of love, will he not care for his own? Who stops to remember that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth"?

Said the late Peter Forsyth: "We have passed into a kind of holiday freedom, speaking of piety as a natural state, enjoying our fine sentiment of reverence for God and declaring our great admiration for Christ and his beautiful teachings, all on the plane of nature itself." Many have come to congratulate themselves on being "as good naturally as the majority of Church members," and that without a particle of repentance for sin, or a thought of conversion to God, or having him to reign in their hearts. "We are better by nature," say they, "than our pious parents were; for are we not better educated, more cultured and refined? Being better informed, more liberal and more intelligent than they, we do not need the religion of our pious parents." Thus, to many, religion has become flabby, self-indulgent, and extremely worldly. Horace Bushnell saw plainly this tendency in his day and said: "Where we shall land, or be stranded rather, is plainly to be seen. Christianity is fast becoming a lost art."

### A LIBERAL THEOLOGY

Much of the lack of a sense of the divine presence may be traceable to the swing back from the more serious theology of our fathers. To them sin was a serious evil, right was right, and God most real. To be religious was the one business of their lives. The religious teaching in their day was that the sinner was "totally depraved"—without religious ability and incapable of a religious desire and of an approach to God. Hence before he could be religious at all he must be given a "new nature," by which he might hope to approach the throne of God and to

live a religious life. This cast of religion our ancestors inherited from their Puritan fathers. This was the religion they brought with them across the ocean when they fled from persecution and came to America to build a "new world" to the glory of God, wherein they might "worship him according to the dictates of their own conscience," in which freedom alone God can be truly worshiped.

Men speak of this as a "harsh" religion and call their morals "severe"; and the term "Puritan" is often used as a term of reproach. But they who lived it were the people who defied the storms of the seas, subdued vast forests, established a popular government and education, bred a learned ministry, built up righteousness in the land, and planted religion in the center of the State. In the stern reality of the rough pioneer days, with a new world to build and herculean tasks to perform, the sense of the need of God's protection and grace was very great, and pious people felt that they must live very close to him. Their recoil from the laxity of English customs made them hostile to mirth and pleasure seeking. They had scant time to spare for pastime frivolities. Besides, such a waste of time was considered sinful and to be renounced as a part of the "vain pomp and glory of the world." Much of this was the accident of the age, it is true, and as the times changed a different spirit emerged. Much of the pioneer life was past, and the people had time to devote to pleasurable recreation. Then a "new theology" had swept over the land, which held that men were created with a religious nature capable of

being developed along with other faculties, and that man was able to seek God as his highest duty.

By holding such views Horace Bushnell raised quite a storm among the theologians in his day, and his teachings were branded as rankest heresy. It was not surprising that a reaction from the old sterner theology should take place; and instead of the earlier rigidity we have the new tolerance; instead of the unlovable morality came a new appreciation of the beautiful, and in place of the "sacred gloom" in religion we have the "joy of salvation." But may we not well ask, Was this transition a moral gain or a religious loss? The answer will depend upon what we may have lost or gained in *religious reality*. If in the transition process, while getting rid of the old uninviting garb of the Puritan religion, we have kept the vital godliness of the Puritan faith and self-surrender, then we have made progress. But the fear is that while reaching out for the joy and the beauties of religious life we have let go the "gold" of the old-time religion. Instead of the more beautiful growth of a flower in religion, we have had the swing of the pendulum and have swung too far. If this be true, it were the calamity of the age.

Hailing with joy the "emancipation from the sterner morality" of the fathers, the world has swung back to where the true sense of sin and of righteousness has been lost. Men no longer seem to know what real religion is. Kindly feelings and love of neighbors are taken for religion. Generosity and humane, brotherly sentiments are considered righteousness,



whether God is at all considered or has an inch of welcome space in the heart.

The world seems to have been blind to the law of spiritual growth and thinks that the highest expression of religion is joy. Men are not made holy by banqueting in pleasure or reveling in the beauties of nature. Such things are the results, not the causes of religion. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of heaven, and all these things shall be added," was the teaching of Jesus. To seek righteousness first is to make possible the natural flower of religion—joy, peace, love, hope—the fruits of the Spirit; but to seek the fruit first, before the growth of the plant, is to reverse the order of nature and attempt the impossible. In religion this means the folly of attempting to develop the higher life and beauty of character from the roots of self-indulgence, and to scorn the teaching of Jesus—which was first self-denial, then the sweetness and joy of religion.

Our age seems to have lost sight of this triumph and gladness, as well as the sense of sin. Instead of being heartbroken over the sense of guilt before God, and wanting to cry to him for pardon and saving grace, men stand bolt upright before God in their self-righteousness and congratulate themselves on how the world smiles on them in their prosperity, as if to be "arrayed in silks and fare sumptuously every day" were a sure mark of God's gracious approval, and they not such bad men after all. Where the sense of the need of God's grace and saving power has faded from our religion, what wonder that we are left to grope in spiritual impotency. We toil and stress, but, like Alice in Wonderland, we race



our best but get nowhere, all because of the lack of divine grace and power. Our churches are amply provided with the latest equipment; still we are defeated and seem to forget that souls cannot be saved by mechanical means or bought with gold at the bar of God.

### THE IDEA OF GOD

The sense of the nearness or absence of the divine presence depends in a large measure upon the conception one may have of God, as taught us in our theology. In the early days of Christianity, when the Church was young, religion was largely an experience rather than a dogma. Then God was felt to be near and his presence was a power. But if a thought is to be taught to others, it must be systematized. Thus we have gotten our theology. The idea of God has varied according to thought garbs of the ages down through which it has come. Arianism was among the early attempts to codify theology; and in it there was an attempt to bring God near. But it did the very reverse by holding that it was an impossibility for God to incarnate himself and feel the touch of human sympathy and the throb of human sorrow. The result was what we know to-day as an "absentee divinity," which destroys the sense of God's presence entirely. Man came to think of God hardly at all; and divine fellowship was not a part of religion. The result of such an idea of God can plainly be seen; yet this theology held sway for a great number of years.

In later years Calvinism arose to assert the supreme sovereignty of God. While this theology held to the great human need of God and to the

gift of a new nature, it destroyed fellowship with God by teaching that men cannot certainly know that they are saved and therefore the sons of God. They may only "hope" that they have such a high heritage. Great and good men groped their way through life with the flickering light as it shines in some of the old hymns, a few of which may still be found in the hymnals of to-day. Such a thought as the "joy of salvation" seems not to have entered as an element of the Calvinistic theology. Masterful as that theology is, and the vast good its adherents have accomplished in the world, it lacks the sense of sins forgiven and the gladness of a definite knowledge of sonship with God and his abiding presence with us. Yet Calvinism did much to offset the extreme Mysticism, with its tendency to exaggerate the idea of communion with God, to weaken reverence, and to withdraw God from the progressive life of the world. To know God, the Mystics taught, one must withdraw from the world; and to have sweet communion with him, one must "walk down the valley of silence, down the dark valley alone." In their prayers, often, language is used which seems bereft of proper reverence and that verges on flippant familiarity with the Almighty.

#### EVANGELISM OFT ABUSED

Growing directly out of Mysticism came modern evangelism with its realistic faith, its buoyant sacred songs, and its holy living, which has made the religion of Jesus a power in the world. With its belief in religious freedom, the need of conversion, the witness of the Spirit, and the world-wide re-

demption of man, it has surpassed all other beliefs in making real the sense of the divine presence and in making Christianity a world force.

Yet this mighty agency has a tendency to exaggerate emotionalism and put feelings forward to the neglect of the will. While emotion accompanies religion, and some men would make it the all of religion and say with one that "religion is all feelings," yet it is the shallowest feature of religion. There is no ethical value in it whatever. Yet many have come to look upon emotion as most essential, and to seek this rather than that which causes it, putting the effect for the cause, forgetful of the fact that our Saviour said: "If any man will *do* his will, he shall know of the doctrine." Nothing is more deceptive and fleeting than an emotion; yet some innocently believe emotionalism to be spirituality. By cultivating this unduly the human has been given supremacy, while the more permanent and real—the divine—has been let to slip from our grasp, thus allowing vital Christianity to become an unknown something to many.

So great an event as the conversion of the soul and the coming of God into the heart must of necessity produce some blessed emotion—a memorable fact ever. This experience rightly belongs to Christianity; and yet we know there can be great emotion where there is no religion whatever. Jonathan Edwards—the father of the "Great Awakening," when the modern revival movement in America began, in which there was great emotion—was slowly driven to oppose all "bodily effects," as he termed them, believing them to be a "falling away from

the high privilege and glory of true religion." The religion of Christ is a spiritual religion, and its true manifestations are spiritual; but to exalt emotionalism at times to the extreme, expect this to last, and be disappointed if it does not, as though God had forsaken the soul, is to do Christianity a serious hurt. Emotionalism which carries people beyond all discretion brings religion into disfavor with right-minded people and discourages the sweet reality of Christian experience. Many hearts have been saddened by the wane of "old-time religion" and joy in the Holy Spirit. This joyous salvation is both an essential and an evidence of religious reality. It was the promised gift of the Saviour, abiding and blessed. But when the joy has gone from our religion, the Spirit from our devotion, sacredness from our songs and prayers, what wonder that we feel as if God had forgotten us, while we approach him with lightness and worship him with our lips only!

#### DEVOTIONAL READING

Good religious books have always been a blessed means of grace. Through this means God speaks to the soul. In days of old men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit, and their messages have come down to us as the Word of God, which has been the lamp of life to a benighted world. Men read the Bible and feel that God is speaking to them therein. But the Holy Spirit has not ceased to move holy men to put their meditations into literary form so as to do men good. The world has its millions of souls, like Enoch, who walk with God; and these men in all ages and lands tell us of their communion



with God and blessed fellowship with him. By them God is speaking to the world in our day. If we have brought articles of commerce from every continent of earth to increase our material comforts, why may we not gather the fruit of meditative minds from all around the earth and let our souls feast upon it? This is our privilege; yet how we do let our souls starve while feeding on the frothy fiction of the day! Good and helpful fiction there is. The best of thought is expressed in that way, and there are available devotional books in abundance; why then should we allow our souls to perish with hunger? The open Bible is ever before us, and St. Paul's instruction to young Timothy, "Give attention to reading," is still a part of God's unrepealed law.

#### THE LAITY NOT TO BLAME

In the matter of being worldly and not realizing the divine presence, our laymen are to be exonerated from the chief blame. It is a fact of history that in any age in modern times, when there has been a religious dearth, the ministry has been *particeps criminis*. Wherever there has been a lack of religious vitality, the shepherds of the sheep, whether priests or pastors, have been remiss in watchfulness and wanting in spiritual power. Not only the religious deadness but much of the unbelief of the times may be found among the ministry. Martineau has said: "For much of the Agnosticism of the age, Gnosticism in theology (rationalism) is to blame."<sup>1</sup> In the darkest days of English religious history, the days of George III, Mr. Blackstone, of eminent

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<sup>1</sup>"Studies in Religion," p. 1, xl (Ed. 1888).



law fame, had the curiosity to visit the prominent churches in London and hear every preacher of note in the city. His report was that he "did not hear a single sermon which had any more Christianity in it than the writings of Cicero; and it would have been impossible to discover whether the preachers were followers of Confucius, Mohammed, or Christ." This same skepticism may be found in some of the pulpits of to-day.

Recently the late Peter Forsyth, addressing an audience of preachers, took occasion to stress the evangelical consciousness and daily experience of sins forgiven. His address created quite a stir, and at its conclusion a clergyman came forward to ask if the speaker was rightly understood, saying that to his "certain knowledge such was the experience of but a few preachers among his associates." "If this be true," said the speaker, "I need not add another word to account for the lack of power and authority. It is not more religion that is needed, but a better grade of religion. For all this lack of pulpit power there is but one cure, and that is a deeper sense, not only of our unworthiness and our eternal ruin, but for the love of God and the cross of Christ and a closer walk with him."

### GOD STILL WITH US

God has never withdrawn himself from the world. He is the same loving Father abiding with us to help and deliver. This truth is evidenced by the beacon lights of history. Looking back over two milleniums, we see that there has never been an age so dark but there were to be found souls in tune with

the Infinite—real oracles who could hear the heavenly voices and interpret the ways of God to men. Christianity has never been without its “other-worldly” souls, men with splendor of vision like John the beloved disciple; golden-mouthed men like Chrysostom and Savonarola; souls with sovereignty of mind like Luther, Knox, and Huss, defying principalities and powers and taking their stand for liberty of thought and God at all hazards; seraphic souls like Fénelon, Wesley, Finney, and Enoch Marvin—Israelites indeed who as princes prevailed with God and with men.

There are such souls in the world to-day with the same sublime faith and instinct for God, whose atmosphere is the divine presence; but somehow we fail to realize their true character; and we look askance at them as rare creatures from a distant clime. An old friend of Mr. Wesley’s, after hearing him preach, wrote him saying: “Your presence creates an awe as if you were an inhabitant of another world.” In a very true sense he was, for he lived in the habitual presence of another world more real to him than was the Kingdom of Great Britain. When tempted to tarry by the roadside and enjoy the pleasures of conversation, he said: “This is sweet, but there is an eternity.” Some one said of him that “he thought only of religion”; but religion has God in it, and this kept his heart aglow, and in its light and with its restraints his life was spent and his noble work accomplished.

Of President Finney it was said: “He looked and spoke and acted like a man handling the invisible and palpable realities of the eternal world there in

the presence of his congregation." The influence of such men is simply immense. They make the spiritual stream of life to flow at high tide, and let us feel the presence of God as never before. Yet the world wants to classify them as men much out of date and ill suited to our hard, commonplace world, men who have come to walk with us for a season. Of one<sup>2</sup> it was said recently: "It is worth his salary to have him to walk our streets." To have the shadow of such men to fall on us as they pass is a benediction; yet we are forgetful of the fact that such men are of common clay like ourselves, and that we may drink of the same fountain and have the same radiance of soul as they. Heavenly voices are vibrant everywhere, but we will not pause to hear them. Mighty power is throbbing all about us, but we are too much steeped in the world to feel its thrill. How busy we are regaling ourselves with "Christianized sociability, gilt-edged materialism, and scrappy culture," all dead to the fact that we know next to nothing of world-redeeming religion and the indwelling of the Spirit of God!

#### MAN'S DEEPER NEEDS

While we may rejoice in having reached a saner theology and a more adequate idea of God, man's needs are deeper than all this. We cannot be satisfied by remembering, with John Fiske, "God is imminent in the world, identifying himself with the daily sequences of life"; or with James Freeman Clarke, that "The universe is a vast loom whose flying shuttles are ever busily weaving the garments

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<sup>2</sup>Theodore F. Brewer.

of God"; nor yet with Lynn Harold Hough when he says, "God is immediately present as a companion to every human being who ever came into the world. To live in the world is to have definite and prolonged contact with the God who is infinitely near to us all."<sup>3</sup> All this is beautiful and is blessed to remember as a natural fact, but such beautiful sentiments may be entertained by one who is a pantheist without one particle of personal piety or sense of the inward presence of God.

What imperfect human nature wants and should seek to realize is the "infinite nearness of God" in a deeply *religious* sense; remembering that in every possible manner God is seeking just this kind of access to the soul, there to reign and comfort and bless. Day by day and night after night God is pressing his claim to a place and recognition in the soul he has created. This fact is felt by all who will consider. When told of God and his love, Helen Keller said: "I have always known him, but I did not know his name." In the foreign mission field there came to light a woman who, on hearing for the first time of Jesus and his love, exclaimed: "O, this is he whom I have found and have with me all the time." This was in darkest Africa, yet it is the same abiding presence that is felt by the cultured Christian mother in dedicating her tender babe to her Lord; the same that was felt by the young patriarch at Bethel on waking from his prophetic dream when he said: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." This same presence is felt by the hero of the cross while bivouacking on life's battle

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<sup>3</sup>"Productive Beliefs," p. 161. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)



front. God's presence has been the secret of the martyrs' strength as they stood up bravely and died gladly for the truth which has come to mean so much to us. It is the source of all soul-redeeming agencies, as well as the clue to all victorious Christian living. It was the swan-song of the hero of Epworth who, after a life of well-nigh miraculous endurance, and dying at the ripe age of eighty-seven, said with his last breath: "The best of all is, God is with us."

There is no time or place where this sweet experience may not be realized; but it does not come from a faith in an impersonal cosmic force at work in the world, pushing mankind forward without their consent or coöperation into an ideal realm where sin and strife are forever a thing of the past. Righteousness is distinctly a thing of human willing. God does not drive; he woos the willing heart. Nor can the presence be realized in a religious way by a scientific research of the universe. Sir Isaac Newton declared that he drew feelingly near to God, not while sweeping the heavens with his telescope and witnessing the marvelous wonders of creation, but in his private room while reading his Bible and on his knees in prayer. Nor does a sense of the divine presence come as a time allotment in man's upward march from primeval savagery, but from a personal willing and fixed desire for such an experience.

In one of his great books, "Donald Grant," George Macdonald describes the discovery of a dungeon in the basement of a castle, where chains were found about the bones of those who had perished there. But the dungeon proved to be an abandoned



chapel. In the sacred place where God was wont to be met and praised souls had been tortured to death. Such indeed is the human heart. In the temple, where God would gloriously meet and bless the waiting spirit, sin and death are found. But, as Macdonald describes, clear out the rubbish, open up the windows, let in the light, and God will come into his own and start up sweet music there again. It is within that we are to find and know God. "Turn to thy heart," says William Law, "and thy heart will find its Saviour, its God, within itself. Thou seest, hearest, and feelest nothing of God because thou seekest for him with thine outward eyes. Thou seekest for him in books, in the controversialists, in the Church and outward exercises; but there thou wilt not find him till thou find him in thy heart. Seek for him in thy heart and thou wilt never seek in vain; for there he dwelleth; there is the seat of his light and Holy Spirit."

Men may speak of this as mystical, and such indeed it is. But the word "mystical" has two widely different meanings. To the mind not cultured in spiritual values it means "that which is obscure and far off." To the deeply religious soul it means the conscious presence of God and his spiritual illumination—that something which gives the soul strength, vision, and power in swaying the life's forces for human uplift. The mystic presence of God is anything but far off; it is infinitely near to us.

The archives of religious history are filled with instances of men who have felt deeply, intimately, and irrefutably the near and actual presence of God.

The Unseen is not only deeply felt, but vividly felt, regarded as a thing of deep significance, and is experienced in most cases with inexplicable joy. James Russell Lowell records in his "Letters" a memorable instance: "As I was speaking (on spiritual matters) the whole system seemed to rise up before me, like a vague destiny out of the abyss. I never before felt the Spirit of God so keenly in me and around me. The air seemed to vibrate to and fro with the presence of a Something, I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet."<sup>4</sup>

In the *Atlantic Monthly* a writer gives even a more graphic experience: "Once out of all the gray days of my life I have looked into the heart of reality; I have witnessed the truth; I have seen life as it really is—ravishingly, ecstatically, madly beautiful, and full to overflowing with wild joy and a value unspeakable. For those glorified moments I was in love with everything living before me—the trees, the little birds flying, the people who came and went. There was nothing alive that was not a miracle; just to be alive was itself a miracle. My very soul flew out of me in great joy."<sup>5</sup> This is life attuned to heaven's harmony.

Such moments are generic to real religion and have been felt by millions of devout, trustful souls. To such souls the world is perfect. There is no fever of confusion, but rapture and rest. To some degree, in religious devotions, a momentous crisis, resignation to calamity or joy of deliverance, souls have felt the enveloping oneness of the Divine most really.

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<sup>4</sup>"Letters," Vol. I, p. 75. <sup>5</sup>Op. cit., Vol. 117, p. 592.

### MAN'S SOUL CAPACITY

In every man there is a greater something than merely a religious instinct or habit of worship, and that something is a *soul capacity for God*. But for this man's instinctive search for God would be futile, for how could he recognize God after he had found him? Man alone of all God's creatures can grow and increase till God finds a dwelling place in his heart. Man's life is blessed in proportion to the manner in which he follows the laws of his spiritual being. Thus he discovers his own capacities and life destiny, and that implies the indwelling of the Spirit of God. "The chamber is not only prepared," says Henry Drummond, "but the Guest is expected and missed till he arrives. Till then the soul longs and yearns and pines." The universal soul wail is, "I perish with hunger"; but there is grandeur in that wail, since it is the *entrée* of the Spirit of God.

The soul of man was not created with a fixed station in life like a diamond, a crystal, or a plant. He has no such limited realm or circumscribed station. He is created for growth, for regeneration, and for perfection in religious fullness till fitted to be the temple of the Lord. Then it is that God "tabernacles with man" and is found dwelling there. If man cannot find God dwelling within himself, he cannot find him anywhere in the world. This fact of God's tabernacling with man makes beautiful much of the doings of the Creator and lights up vast regions of thought that would otherwise remain a mystery forever. In accomplishing this fact God spares himself no pains, not even the death of his beloved Son. Why then should anyone think that

God had forgotten us or had withdrawn his Spirit from the world? If by our indifference to the soul's well-being or progress we shut God out of his own and cause its wreck and ruin, it is God's temple still, only scarred and blackened by the fires of evil—all the more majestic as a ruin, perhaps, if it did not prove its native grandeur by the destruction it resisted in working out its salvation!

### HOW ACCOMPLISH THE FACT?

In the light of personality and its sway by motives, the ever-present problem is, What inducement may be brought to bear upon mankind to enable them to realize the divine Presence? Just how to awaken a heart hunger for God is indeed the problem of Christianity. No invariable formula can be found by which to accomplish the fact, one that will apply to all alike. Our Saviour, with all his wisdom and beautiful simplicity, did not always succeed at this point. "Many went away, and did not believe on him," is the statement of the record. Yet he laid down this principle: "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Now, what could be more simple than the love of Jesus? To have Christ is to have life, and this is to have God's presence within. Yet no scientist can explain the process any more than he can explain the germinating of a seed in the ground. The best that can be said on the subject is only an analogy, a mere hint of the unique truth.

To have Christ is to feel the warming influence of his divine presence. Being created for God, we



may know him, not as an all-pervading Essence, but as a Person, a Friend and Father always with us; not spoiling our natures by taking away our soul liberty, but by fostering our strength and encouraging every holy endeavor. We may know him as we know ourselves. "Since we are God's offspring, we are to live in his Fatherhood" and receive our final completeness in the consciousness of his infinite goodness and abiding presence.

### THE WILL TO BE HOLY

Still the problem remains, how to induce souls to seek the divine presence—who shall do it, when, and where? This simple process of finding God—so simple that a child may know it, yet deep enough to engage the greatest mind—has two sides, a divine and a human side. The divine side calls for repentance, for being born again, for being renewed in the spirit of the mind, and having Christ formed within as the hope of glory. But all these are passive terms, suggestive of submission rather than action. In the great enterprise is there nothing that man can do? The doctrine of "human inability" as a theory of religion was never satisfactory and never will be. Any scheme which bridges over man's free agency and personal responsibility is untrue to human nature and false to God. While God works within, helping man to will and to do that which pleases God, it becomes man's chief duty to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling," thus being the master of his own destiny. As a coworker with God, man must act his part in the drama of life. He cannot do God's part, nor can God do his, else it would

be God's act and not man's. Man's part is to have a will to be holy, to make God's will his will, and to so walk with God as to starve out the old life and nurture the new by abiding in Christ as the branch abides in the vine. Thus God's presence will be real and blessed, as we walk this troubled mundane path.

### PRAYER THE CHIEF MEANS

After all, the chief means of securing the abiding presence of God is prayer. The Christian's life is a life of prayer—prayer for divine help, for knowing the will of God, for communion with him as a child with a father, and for strength and guidance in the struggles of life. Great Christians in all ages have been mighty men of prayer. Such indeed was our Saviour. How can a prayerless soul be a live Christian? A prayerless church is a dead church and a reproach to any community. Prayer is the power house of victory always.

God comes into the heart only upon personal willing. Let men desire his indwelling, let them seek this of God and earnestly long for it, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," and they shall be filled; and never again shall it be asked, "What is the matter with the world? has God forgotten us?" For he will walk with us, be in us, be our God, and we shall be his people, "his sons and his daughters." This joy will be realized, not in the rapt frenzy of the dancing dervishes, nor yet in the "enthusiasm" of the Pietists who in the days of the Reformation in France and England made the very name of religion to be a reproach among right-minded people. But the glory will appear in the sweet reasonable-

ness and love as manifested in the character of our blessed Lord, and which we may know for ourselves as the gift of the Father, fulfilling the promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Love seeks companionship and bears the image of the beloved in the heart. If we love God, we will want his image in us all the time as our redeeming Father and Friend.

How blessed the experience attending the realization of the Unseen Presence! When this is realized, life is clear, beautiful, and complete. What otherwise seems dark and perhaps cruel shines out in a setting of divine wisdom and love; what seemed contrary and fragmentary finds its rightful place in the divine mosaic. What natural ideal is ever completely realized? Some perfection remains to be desired. Yet in religion, when God is felt to be near and his will dominant, perfection is found, if found at all, and harmony and ultimate sufficiency prevail. Then, apart from reasoning or any penetration of the intellect, the divine presence, when intense, gives man a "translucent insight" during which he sees deeply, calmly, and joyously into the beauty of the eternal order of things. This mystic sense seems to rise to the higher level of consciousness in which one can realize a universe more significant and orderly than can possibly be known by the senses. Be the sky dark or clear a sure consciousness asserts

God's in his heaven—  
All's right with the world!"

and a calm joy follows this sense of God's sovereign sway. Then it is that our religion becomes dynamic and most real.





CHAPTER XII  
THE ETHICAL REIGN OF GOD

"Since God loves us, all things must be for the best."

—*German Proverb.*

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."—*Galatians vi. 7, 8.*

"They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind"—the cyclone.—*Hosea viii. 7.*

"The heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the firmament showeth his handiwork."

—*David.*

## CHAPTER XII

### THE ETHICAL REIGN OF GOD

MAN is by creation essentially a ruler. He must have his domain, whether it be an empire or the ethical world within his own personality, where none but he dare give command. Yet this same born sovereign is never so happy as when he feels that he himself is wisely and well governed. He feels that he too is under authority. Even in the exercise of his *personal liberty*—that something in which his moral manhood rests—he finds this precious boon sweeter and safer when kept under the sway of the thought that for this he must give an account to his Maker. Under no circumstances can he escape the sway of a Power greater than himself.

That there is a God, the Creator of all things, whose throne is the center of the universe, whose will is supreme law, and that this same God is our merciful Heavenly Father who governs the world by the law of love, is perhaps the greatest thought ever conceived by the human intellect. In comparison with this all other thoughts pale into insignificance. How blessed the thought that this God, "whom to know aright is life eternal," is Sovereign over all! Yet some would have us to think that the universe, with all its matchless grandeur and teeming life, came into existence of itself and goes groping adrift on the ocean of space without a Pilot's hand to guide its destinies. But no amount of sophistry

has ever been able to induce mankind to adopt such a philosophy. The universe is its own demonstration that it is not a creature of chance, and man instinctively recognizes the need of a divine Ruler. In his saner thoughts he would not have it otherwise.

### THE CONSTANT GUIDING HAND

It was not enough that the worlds should have come into existence and life started upon its wonderful mission. By what power do they continue as they are, and by what wisdom shall they be guided in the future? The same laws of intelligent thought, which in logical sequence compelled the admission of a Creator, demand also the sustaining power and guiding hand in all the affairs of life. Who has not rejoiced with King David that "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork"? And yet is it not a sweeter thought still to think and feel that we are held safe in the hollow of God's great hand?

If the unaided eye beholds a celestial scene which awakens such ecstasy of admiration and wonder, what must be the awe inspired by viewing the heavens through the most powerful telescope, revealing an empire of blazing suns and revolving systems far beyond anything the most fertile imagination can conceive? Amid the splendor of the vast universe in which our world is really but a tiny speck upon the horizon, astronomers behold God at work, pervading, upholding, and guiding all things with the majesty of his presence and the constancy of his care.

But in the rapture awakened by God's vast and

splendid domain these same awe-inspired minds have felt the chilling sense of loneliness creeping into their hearts, and the question arising, Is it possible for God, whose attention is fixed upon all this splendid domain, to find time or be disposed to give attention to so small a sphere as the earth? Does God interest himself with the moral realm of man? Does God care for me, a single atom of human life?

There is a principle in philosophy which teaches that it is not possible to give profound attention to more than one object at one and the same time. What we gain by "intention" we lose in "extension." When the whole receives concentrated thought, we of necessity must lose sight to some extent of the individual unit. Now, while this is a law of the finite human mind, who does not rejoice that such restrictions are not applicable to the mind of God? His attention is equally given to all alike. No limit can be set to his infinite attention or his provident care. What distress of mind would arise if we were driven to the conclusion that God in creating the universe did so adjust the affairs and set the immense machinery to going so perfectly that it no longer needed his immediate attention! Hence he withdrew into the infinite beyond to give his attention to enterprises of greater moment or to become an infinite Idler!

The study of materialistic science at present has the tendency to drift into this dismal swamp. The habit of dealing with fixed laws in material things leads to a desire to apply the same laws to spiritual things. But we know that "spiritual things are spiritually discerned," and not subject to material



laws. Being more refined, they belong to a higher order of things, and are reached by a different approach. Yet the soul of finest faith is often troubled with the thought, "Does God care for the world? Can he find time to give to such things as human interests? If God does not care for the world, what will become of it?" Is "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute" our destiny, while God has no immediate concern for us or dealings with us?

Such questions are not altogether imaginary troubles. They spring from the sincerity of honest hearts. When the great Daniel Webster came down to his dying bed, it was his earnest wish to leave behind him a declaration of his belief in the Christian religion, so he dictated this confession: "Philosophical arguments, especially those drawn from the vastness of the universe in comparison with the apparent insignificance of this globe, have sometimes shaken my reason for the faith that is in me; but my heart assures me and reassures me that the gospel of Jesus Christ is a divine reality."<sup>1</sup>

#### DISTRESSING HALF TRUTH

Such doubts and distress are the product of a half truth. If the invention of one scientific instrument, the telescope, has given occasion for doubting the imminence of God and his provident care in all human life, the invention of another instrument, the microscope, has effectually offset that doubt and corrected the evil. While one instrument brought myriads of distant worlds into view, the other instrument revealed quite as wonderful a realm in

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<sup>1</sup>"Life," by Smucker, p. 145.

the microscopic world around us, teeming with active life quite as real as the life we live, and cared for by the same divine power which watches over us. These two inventions have compensated each other and produced a stabilizing of thought. They have let men see that while God is busily engaged in unlimited space far beyond the reach of the most powerful telescope, he is at the same time unfailing in his watch care over the frailest bird that flies, the tiniest flower that blooms, or the minutest coral insect that lives unseen in the bosom of the ocean. No thought could be more reassuring to human hearts than this. Man walks the earth amid myriads of living things which attest God's tenderest care, and where his constant power and his unmistakable watch care are none the less manifest than is his majestic presence in the ponderous worlds and shining spheres that people space. "It is wonderful," says Thomas Chalmers, "that the same God whose presence is diffused through immensity, and who spreads the ample canopy of his administration over all its dwelling places, should with an energy as fresh as if he had only begun the work of creation, turn himself to the region around us and lavish on its every handbreadth all the exuberance of his goodness and crown it with every variety of conscious existence."<sup>2</sup> However great the wonder, we do not suffer our minds to be burdened with the least doubt, because we do not question the testimony of the two scientific instruments, and not least the microscope.

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"Astronomical Discourses," p. 108. American Tract Society.

Somewhere in the grand galaxy of creation God has given mankind a rightful place, safe in his infinite goodness and sovereign care, there to perform some important part in the matchless machinery of the universe.

But this matchless grandeur is seen in what may be called a mechanical world where fixed laws prevail and scientific certainty is discovered. But higher up in the order of existence lies the moral world, where ethical conditions are found and human life is aglow. Here sin and sorrow are found and life is often far from an existence of joy. Here evil is seen to triumph and good is often defeated and lost. Hence man wants to ask seriously enough, If there be a God and his ethical reign is supreme, why does evil exist and sin's confession follow? Is there no divine Ruler in the moral world, such as is seen in the material realm, to guide and protect man from evil?

### SURFACE TURMOILS

On the surface of the sea of human life there may appear only the confusion of the lashing waves of sin and sorrow, giving no hint of the great sea currents which everywhere exist; but deep down beneath the troubled waves of human passion and pride there reigns the eternal purpose of God deeply fixed in the sovereignty of his love, and no amount of human rebellion and strife can bring it to naught.

It may be said of almost any well-governed country that its loyalty is deficient and its patriotism nil. Such traits often lie dormant in times of peace, since there is no occasion to call forth their display. Here, as in the kingdom of God, the duty of every

man is not to grasp and exercise authority over his fellow, but to bring his own life into subjection to inherent social laws. All best-governed people are those who govern themselves the best. They who are wise do not wait for the outward pressure of faithful citizens. While evil has its punishment in the government of God, the glory of heaven's Ruler is seen best in the righteous life of his earthly subjects. God cannot compel fidelity in a free soul. This would be to override the moral nature of man, deprive him of the noble gift of self-determination, and destroy the very foundation of liberty and of religion.

Notwithstanding all the wickedness, crime, and suffering, God is preëminent in the world and sovereign still. His eye is watchful of human affairs; and if a sparrow cannot fall to earth without his notice, can it be possible that empires shall rise and mankind succeed without his knowledge? Yet the question will recur: "If God rules the world, and is wise and good, why is there so much of sin and suffering?" Could God not have made a world where sin is impossible, where there is no suffering and sorrow? Are these a necessity in the economy of God?

It is not best for man to be saying what God should have done or left undone; his duty is to adjust himself to the world as he finds it and learn to know its laws and obey them.

### A PAINLESS WORLD

In answer to the question, "Why did God not make a world where pain and suffering are not?"



let us say that this is exactly what God has already done. That painless world is all about us—a world with which we have to do every day we live. And a marvelous world it is, full of wisdom and beauty, manifesting much of the skill of God's creative powers. Life is there at work in all of its order and perfection. There we find generation, growth, maturity, fruitage, and death—all, but without the possibility of a single pain, heartache, or suffering, because it is a world without a vestige of a nerve of brain. It is that world in which Luther Burbank, "the plant wizard," has accomplished so many of his wonderful deeds. This we recognize as the "Vegetable Kingdom." There God is so marvelously manifesting himself in the beauties of the lilies and the fragrance of blossoms, in structure of stalk, petal, and stamen. He who has not observed the marvelous wonders of the plant life has not learned the right use of his powers of observation. Surely in the plant world God has not failed to write the record of his creative intelligence, in a world without a single heartache or pain!

But some one will say: "If God could not have made a world with a brain and nerves without pain and suffering, could he not have made a world where there could have been no sins committed and no sorrow felt?"

#### A SINLESS WORLD

Yes, it was possible for God to create a kind of a world and make sinning an impossibility; and let us remember that he has created exactly this sinless world. "O," you say, "that is the world for which I sigh. Let me live in a world like that!" Have not



great souls given expression to just this same feeling? Did not Thomas Huxley once say, "I declare that if some great power were to agree to make me think what is always true and do what is right on the condition of my being made into a kind of a clock and wind me up every morning, I would instantly close with the bargain"? In closing with that offer what would be the consequences? That would indeed be a most expensive transaction, for he should have to surrender his personality, lose his identity, and forfeit his liberty. He would become a mere machine and no longer be a man.

In the sinless world there are affection, mother love, enjoyment, eyes to behold the beauties of nature, memory, music—in fact, many of the powers which bless our human life. But there is no sin, because there is no moral intelligence or religious instinct. This we know as the "Animal Kingdom." Here there are to be found many of the traits which belong to man. Birds have music, animals have a low grade of intelligence, and in a limited way some of them have wonderful memories. Some dogs and wild animals have the instinct of cunning to a surprising degree, and many of them can be educated to a considerable extent. What truer friend has man than his "faithful dog," who will leave his own species and fight them in defense of his master?

All this occurs in the sinless world where there is no moral responsibility. Your horse or your dog may be vicious and deserve to be slain, but you never think of them as being sinful. But this is in the low, animal grade of life.

Now, which of us, in view of the ills to which our

flesh is heir, would surrender the dignity, the grandeur, and the joys of his human station, and step down to the unmoral brute life or the nerveless plant life in order to escape the possibility of sinning or suffering? What misfortune do we lament so much as the paralysis of the nervous system or the loss of our reasoning powers? Just these two things, *nerves* and *reason*, constitute the glory of man. They make the joy of life possible and existence desirable. By them God effects his sensible approach to man in blessings of every sort.

It was not possible, so we deem, to make nerves and pleasurable sensation a possibility without making pain a possibility in life. Pleasurable sensations and pain are carried to the brain by the same nervous system. The faculty of great joy carries with it the ability to suffer greatly. The soul not awake to the deeper sufferings of life is found to be also dead to the intense delights of life. The noblest souls are the deepest sufferers in mind and body. The nerve senses of the body by which we realize suffering are but the avenues by which we enjoy all of the God-given pleasures of life. The pain we feel is often but nature's warning as we approach danger or violate some vital law, and is therefore the guardian of life. Here we discover the purpose of every pain and every sorrow. There has never been a calamity in all history that was not God's protest against the violation somewhere, whether deliberate or not, of his infinite plans for human well-being and happiness. God has made the way of right most beautiful and blessed, though hills are to be climbed and battles fought; and there is nothing truer than

the Scripture, "The way of the transgressor is hard." It is far from the truth to hold with Hawthorne, in "The Marble Faun," that sin is necessary in the government of God and an essential in the development of a great character. To hold to such an opinion would be to impeach the wisdom [and goodness of God our Creator. In our world of moral free agency sin and suffering must be a possibility, but a necessity never, else the very foundations of moral accountability would be gone.

### THREE POSSIBLE CREATIVE SCHEMES

How could the Creator have made sin an impossibility without destroying the very world relations which he had made? There are but three conceivable ways of looking at the problem: (1) God could have refrained from creating man altogether. (2) He might have hedged man about with powerful restraints so that he could not desire to commit sin. (3) God might have surrounded the free soul with such an abundance of such persuasive beauty that he would never want to commit sin.

Would either of these schemes have answered God's purpose in the creation of man and have contributed to the further enhancing of the life of man? Let us look at them one by one:

*Scheme one.* If God had refrained from creating man, it would appear that God was afraid to trust himself in the creation of such an infinite possibility as the soul of man. Then again, if no moral agent had ever been created anywhere in the universe, it is clear that none could have appeared in the world, the highest order of existence could not have been

attained, and the noblest order of being would have been wanting. God would have fallen short.

*Scheme two.* To have hedged man about with forceful restraints were to have made him free and then denied him the power of exercising his freedom, which is a contradiction in fact—the suspension of his very nature by destroying his liberty. Could there be a moral universe without a dual choice? or a free mind with no evil to choose? One would as well speak of a thinking mind with nothing to think about, or eyes to see and nothing to look at, which is nonsense. And yet it is as reasonable as a free soul hedged about with forceful restraints so as not to commit sin.

*Scheme three.* This has no better merit than the others. To create a moral world and then govern it by such a display of divine influence as to overpower and reduce to submission the will of man, either by glad or beautiful agencies, so as to defeat its willing would be to destroy the personality of man. In brief, it would be God's will and not man's, from which man could not derive any merit.

This brings us back to the absurdity of the thought of a world without any allurements to sin, yet with holy beings in it. Wills must have motives to actions—good motives, bad motives—and the will to act must not be taken away, else the deeds when done become another's and not our own, in which there can be no human merit.

### THE GREAT INQUIRY

Still the question will recur, Why should an all-wise and loving Heavenly Father create a being



capable of choosing evil and place him is a world like ours fraught with such far-reaching consequences?

The answer lies chiefly in the nature of God himself—in his desire for the voluntary return of his love bestowed upon his intelligent, sentient, spiritual children. This is love's great law. It seeks always love returned. We feel that we should love God because he first loved us. His love begets this sense of obligation. Love must have fellowship and be reciprocated or it will die. Thus God created such a being as man, having freedom of will and affection, upon whom he could lavish his great love, and by whom righteous love could be intelligently and voluntarily returned. God wants not simple obedience and adoration, but a glad, heartfelt affection freely given; for with just such love he has loved us. It is only when we fail to be swayed by his love and fail of love's beautiful and lofty ideals in life that we give place to evil and become sinners in the sight of God. Surely it is reasonable to think that such a world as ours is infinitely best. A universe eternally prearranged and mechanically grinding out its fixed results, with no possibility for human initiative or merit, under the iron laws of invariable necessity, could not answer the divine Creator or culminate in the soul's highest ends of voluntary obedience and love to the Heavenly Father. The ethics of God's rule is readily seen. In creating free agents it was necessary to leave them free in order to secure the existence of moral goodness and thereby fulfill the grand ends of all creation. In moral freedom lies



the foundation of all righteousness, religious possibility, and eternal hopes.

### THE ETHICS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

It is the profound prerogative of God to maintain the ethical integrity of his kingdom always and everywhere. God must maintain justice, mercy, and love along with human freedom and at the same time have supreme regard for the governmental consistency of his reign. It is not with any one feature of God's nature that man must be satisfied. No one of his attributes can be lauded to the neglect of another. "His passion of love would be as little at rest as his passion of justice with any dealing which did not keep all profound ethical interests amply protected."<sup>3</sup> Patient mercy and love are no less essential to God's rule than are justice and truth or wisdom and might. In the beginning God established his system of government; and as he is a God that changes not, that system is ever the same. He governs all things according to the nature he has given them. He does not create the free human soul and then attempt to govern it by the laws intended for material forces. Compelled obedience can never be virtuous or holy. In speaking of God's government of the world, many seem to forget this underlying truth and think of God's ethical reign in the world as if a father would attempt to control his child as he does his horse or his automobile. How does the Heavenly Father deal with his earthly children? Upon exactly the same principle he deals

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<sup>3</sup>"Productive Beliefs," L. H. Hough, p. 142. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)

with nations as with individuals, and he has the same law for the rich as for the poor, and the greatness or smallness of the offense does not receive different recognition from him. God did not have a law for David as king of Israel and a different law for present-day rulers. Men try to persuade us that we have outlived the Decalogue and the old foundations of equity.

Men who are indifferent enough toward God in ordinary life are frantic enough in their appeals to him in times of trouble. When the great World War broke out men who had no use for God before then were eloquent in their appeals to the Church to call upon God in prayer that he would stop the dreadful drama in its very beginning and spare mankind the consequences of that which they had brought upon themselves. Men could see that "all wars are an abomination unto the Lord," but had forgotten that all sin stands before him in the same pillory as war, as intemperance, as social degeneracy, as dishonesty. God would no more strike down the great war lords and stop the war than he would have stricken down a thief in the act of stealing or any other individual for the smallest act of sin. In either case he would have resorted to force to coerce a free being answerable to God for his own life, and in so doing become a violator of his own established laws. God has his law of "cause and consequence," and while man cannot control the consequences, he can control the cause. If man starts the great ball to rolling, he must not be surprised at the damage that may be caused. "He that sows must reap," and the late World War was a staggering harvest from sowing

"dragons' teeth." For a quarter of a century the world was busily sowing the seeds of war. Nothing was more evident or easy of proof than this. Thoughtful men everywhere recognized the signs of the times and sounded the alarm, but no one heeded their warning.

It is a principle of wide acceptance that while authority which limits freedom of action may result in sloth and intellectual decay, liberty without law degenerates into licentiousness and moral anarchy. In the light of this truth see how for decades the world went on sowing broadcast the seeds of destruction and for five desperate years did reap the fruits of that sowing!

#### VON NEITZSCHE'S SUPERMAN

It would be rather extravagant to hold with some that Von Neitzsche was to blame for the horrible world conditions leading up to the recent great war. Yet his "superman" idea, the "man of iron" marching to his goal regardless of consequences to the rest of mankind, was back of Germany's war spirit. In it was embodied the doctrine of the "survival of the fittest." This doctrine was taken up by predatory wealth and competitive commerce, as best suited to their economic interests in pushing their "graft" to the ends of the earth. The labor class hailed it with delight, and nowhere else was the "iron-man" spirit more defiant. Labor "struck" in defiance of the laws of labor unions. This was of course the end of all authority and law, yet the monster grew till it lifted its head with an ambition to encircle the entire globe. Early in the present

century riots were rife in all countries, no less than in our beloved America; and many were ready to enforce their demands with the emphasis of dynamite. Their intention was to terrorize. Lockouts, train wrecking, the blowing up of railroad bridges, strikes—all that horror such as the world had seldom known—became items of daily news. Hastily assembled mobs in the street took the reins of government into their own hands, and fiendish vengeance pushed Rule from the throne of state. In some lands kings and rulers were assassinated and justice outraged amid mutterings of treason because certain classes did not always get their desires gratified. “Rights” were demanded regardless of duties or obligations.

All this was cutting away the foundations of society which exist only upon the basis of mutual coöperation and fairness. And all those who attack law and order do so little dreaming that they are tugging at the pillars upon which society rests, and are pulling its ruins down upon their own heads as certainly as Samson pulled down the temple of Dagon in the days of old.

#### ALL GERMANY SOWING DRAGONS’ TEETH

There was a time when all roads led to Germany. In art and science, in literature and religion, it was thought that no student’s education was complete without the touch of a German professor’s hand. All the world bowed to German scholarship.

Yet the most conspicuous “sowing of the seeds of war” to be found in modern history went on in the German Empire for the space of forty years, the result of which was the dominance of the whole em-



pire by one deadly idea, and that idea was the supremacy of Force. Eucken and his followers taught that the "ultimate reality was Spirit and Germany was the chief bearer of that Spirit, therefore Germany was the destined ruler of the world." By whatever process she might attain the mastery, she was but coming to where she might impress the ultimate reality upon mankind. Bernhardi believed that "the ultimate reality was force, and therefore might is supreme, and Germany should rule the world because she is able." World-renowned teachers of ethics preached that the "will of the empire was the highest law"—that the law of love and sacrifice as embodied in the Golden Rule applied only to individuals, that the law of the State was the law of might—the bloody law of the jungle. All small States must succumb to the great State.

Thus all lines of teaching converged to support the program of world conquest. To this end the Empire was put upon the strongest possible war basis. Her armies and navies were brought to the highest possible state of preparedness that science could suggest. The spirit of the mighty "war lords" brooded over the nation till the most fanatical of the people came to long for "Der Tag"—the day when the mighty conquest should begin—confidently believing that in all the vast national preparation there was manifest the hand of the "good old Teutonic war god, Thor," who was raising up their nation to rule the world by her kultur.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The *Jung-Deutschland* (the journal of the class of young Germans corresponding to our Boy Scouts) for October, 1913, has this statement: "War is the holiest and noblest expression



Henri Bergson described the German thought as it came to exist in 1914: "Her ambition looked forward to the dominance of the world. Moreover, there was no moral restraint which could keep this ambition under control. Intoxicated by victory and the prestige which victory had given her and of which her commerce, her industry, her science even, had reaped the benefit, Germany plunged into a material prosperity such as she had never known or had ever dreamed of. She told herself that if force had wrought this miracle, if force had given her these riches and honor, it was because force had within it a hidden virtue, mysterious—nay, even divine. Yes, even brute force, with all its train of trickery and lies, when it comes with power of attack sufficient for the conquest of the world, must needs have behind it divine direction and be a revelation of the will of God. The people to whom this power of attack has come were the elect of God, a chosen race by whose side other races are but bondsmen. To such a race nothing is forbidden that might help it to establish its dominion. Let none speak of 'inviolable rights.' Right is what is written in the treaty; and the treaty is that which registers the will of the conqueror—which is the direction of his force for the time being. 'Force' then and 'right' are

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*of human activity.*" Bernhardt, in his "The Kultur-Idea and the State," has this to say: "Between the States there is only one course of right—the right of the strongest. It is perfectly reasonable that wars should arise between States. . . . It is impossible that the State should commit crime. . . . Not all the treaties in the world can alter the fact that the weaker is always prey to the stronger. . . . The lesser State must give way to the stronger."

the same things; and if force is pleased to take a new direction, the old 'right' becomes ancient history, and the treaty which backs it with solemn understanding becomes no more than a scrap of paper."

### THE RELIGIOUS BREAKDOWN

The most alarming event of a few decades back was the breakdown of the authority of religion in the lands where the great war took its rise. The State came to dominate the schools and colleges as well as the pulpits. Teachers and preachers were employed, not because they were righteous and sound-minded and declared the truth, but because they were in accord with the ruling class, and taught not the laws of God, but the code of the Empire. Men of position and honor publicly boasted of their "free thinking" and came to ridicule the teachings of Christ. Bernhardi publicly declared that "the Reformation of Luther's time had kept the Empire back a thousand years, by softening the people."

### TRUTH WILL OUT

Since "truth crushed to earth will rise again," doubtless the time is not far off when it will be generally known that the crowned heads of the Triple Empire, seeing the gathering storm of social discontent which threatened the overthrow of the thrones of all Europe, resorted to "that last trick of tottering dynasties" and proclaimed a war which they did not want, hoping thereby to rid their realms of the disturbing element and in the possible success of the war stabilize their tottering thrones. But for the coming on of the war, the "Red Terror,"

which was with difficulty held in check after the signing of the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles, would doubtless have swept over all Europe as it did Russia, and have menaced all the civilized world.

During those decades of social and political discontent and the coming into self-consciousness of world-wide democracy men spoke of feeling as if the end of the world were at hand, and every one seemed eager to rush upon the stage and enact his part of the great drama before the curtains were finally rung down. Science was doing its utmost in the production of death-dealing instruments and materials, as if the taking of human life were the highest achievement. All Europe became a vast military camp. The great Powers were armed to the teeth under the delusion that "preparedness is the prevention of war." But the war lords were eager for an opportunity to display their prowess and hailed the day of action with delight. When at length the spark was applied to the mass of highly inflammable materials, what a cyclone of fury and flame burst upon the helpless world! For fifty-two months its fiery billows hissed and roared and swept through the nations, as if Satan himself were at large among mankind.

Now that the gruesome garnering goes on, what appalling figures sum up the totals! Nearly thirty millions of lives were lost, due directly or indirectly to the war. Three hundred billion dollars worth of property was destroyed. The national debts of the world went from forty billions to two hundred and fifty billions—five hundred per cent increase. Paper money was increased from five to fifty-six billions,

while the gold reserve dwindled from seventy-five per cent to twelve.<sup>5</sup> Many of the nations engaged in the ghastly conflict were left hopelessly bankrupt with their people starving—and the end is not yet. But the saddest phase of it all was the fact that of the many nations engaged in the war, all but three—Turkey, China, and Japan—were Christian nations, representing all branches of the Christian Church, but all forgetting that “God is not mocked” and bitterly reaping what they had sowed, reaping the whirlwind from having sown to the wind.

#### HAD GOD LOST CONTROL?

Now, what shall we say of all this tragedy which one would gladly wipe from memory’s tablet if he could? In the terrible times of death and destruction men who had no use for God in the days of their prosperity lifted up their voices in pleading to the all-powerful God to stop the war, to save their wealth, and to spare their dear sons. The Church was frantically appealed to; and because the war went on men were clamorous in their verdict that “the Church is a failure,” that “there is no God,” or, if he exists at all, he has lost control of the affairs of the world. Even true and faithful Christians were greatly disturbed over the attitude of God toward the troubled hearts and sorrowing nations. But after time for calm deliberation what shall we say? Had God forgotten the world, or did he put his hand over his face and shut out the view of so terrible a tragedy?

But was not God in the midst of it all? Was his

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<sup>5</sup>“In His Image,” Bryan, p. 234. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)



presence not realized by the heroes and trenchmen as never before in all their lives? Was not the hand of God plainly visible in the uprising of the many nations of earth to put down, at whatever cost, the nations holding those fiendish doctrines, that "might makes right," that "Christianity is the greatest blasphemy of all time, enchaining and softening men," that the Golden Rule expressing itself in modern democracy is "herd morality, fit only for women and Englishmen," and that sacred treaties between nations become at times "mere scraps of paper"? Was not the hand of God equally as visible in putting down any nation or nations who could treat an unoffending neighbor as Belgium and her women and children were treated—that foul blot on the pages of human history which time can never erase? If such a nation were allowed to prosper and become able to accomplish her ambition of world dominance, then indeed might the question be asked, "Is there no God in the heavens, and none to rule in righteousness in the earth?"

Was not the ethical rule of God in the world and his sovereignty over a world of moral accountability vastly more evident in allowing the law of consequences—sowing and reaping—to work itself out than it would have been in having arrested the freedom of men, of individuals and nations, and reduced them to mere unmoral automatons? All sins are an abomination to God, hence the blight and suffering of them all. The World War was not of God's making. It was all man's designing. The seeds were deliberately sown by evil men, and the results were, as all war's results have always been,

deeply destructive, deluging the world with blood, sorrow, and tears. Men want to hold God to account for it all, for allowing such to occur. But all wars are of human origin, and all suffering and sorrow grow out of the relation which man as a free being sustains to the universe. Man may forget this, but God still reigns.

Careless seems the great Avenger.  
History's pages but afford  
One death grapple in the darkness  
'Twixt old systems and his Word  
Truth forever on the scaffold,  
Wrong forever on the throne;  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
And behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow,  
Keeping watch above his own.

### THE POISE OF FIXED PRINCIPLE

Holding this opinion on so stupendous a question may be deemed considering lightly the darkest tragedy that the world has ever experienced. Is it not a poise out of proportion to the gravity of the question? Such a view of the great question is not the poise of indifference, indicating a lack of knowledge, and therefore a lack of appreciation of the enormity of the subject. The poise assumed is that of fixed principle on the part of God in dealing with the affairs of life, however great they may be. It would have been folly to have expected the Almighty God to suspend a fundamental and universal law which has been in effect since time began or arrest its results all because men in their madness amassed the inflammable materials and a single individual

applied the spark and started a conflagration which got beyond all control. Men know the laws of combustion, even in the realm of national politics; but they do not always regard the law of consequences. They toy with fire and get burned, then want God miraculously to stop the pain and heal the blisters. It is common at such times to hear men appeal to the omnipotence of God. They say: "Is not God omnipotent? If so, then why does he not stop the calamity?"

The omnipotence of God must not be interpreted so as to destroy his ethical reign in the world or do away with the moral nature of man. God cannot do that which is contrary to the laws of his own being or involve him in self-contradictions. "The laws of nature are the laws of God," so that by recognizing these as they are and conforming to them we are in harmony with God's plan for human life. The magnitude of the calamity must not be allowed to sweep us off our feet and lead us to think that, because of the vastness of the catastrophe, God would become alarmed and conclude to reverse one of his fundamental laws—the law of consequences—and prevent the frightful harvest. If such were to be the ways of God, what would be left us as a basis of eternal verity upon which to stand and reckon for all the future? What would be the ultimate moral consequences if such were to happen and men feel that God had established so precarious a precedent? As nature now stands, with God's laws fixed and sure, we see how defiant evil is on every hand; but let men once think that even God had weakened and his administration of earthly affairs had failed, how the

evildoers would have rushed out—as they always do when the voice of law is hushed—to work their ruin and glut their greed! What a bedlam of chaos and iniquity this world would become! Life would be one prolonged nightmare of anarchy and dread consternation, a veritable hades on earth!

What therefore might at first thought have seemed to imply that the Heavenly Ruler had abandoned his control of the world and turned it over to evil agencies comes to be recognized as the strongest evidence of the *reality of his ethical reign* in the world. He had neither abandoned his throne in the heavens nor adopted a new code of laws in the earth, but maintained that which had been in existence from the beginning. On this solid rock we can all stand and build our hopes for all the future.

Sin's consequences always carry with them a bitter cup of sorrow and suffering for the innocent. This was the foulest blot on the history of the World War—the curse of Cain on the brow of the age which the future can never forget. But when has there ever been race advancement without the toll of human sacrifice and the suffering of the innocent? This has always been the bitter accident of human progress.

Yet the time is not far distant when men shall come to think that, while the cost of the Great War was fearful, the end achieved will in a measure compensate for the price paid. If the dreadful plow-share which overturned the world prepared the nations for a richer harvest in noble human existence, if out of it all there shall come a world-wide enlargement of life and liberty—when the reign of the superman shall be forever put down, and the iron



tread of Might over Right banished from earth, and there shall come a new conscience for the rich, when the laboring class shall receive more adequately of the fruits of their toil, and the bond of brotherhood reach across national and racial lines and gird the whole earth—then it will be thought that those who suffered the greatest heart anguish, as well as those who sleep in Flanders' fields, did not give their life wholly in vain.

Now that the stupendous tragedy is past and vast numbers have dropped back into their accustomed channels of petty strife, let us hope that never while time lasts will any nation defy the sovereignty of God or try to reverse the eternal law of cause and effect, or forget that above all empires or mighty war lords there stands the High Tribunal of humanity before which men and nations shall ultimately stand, nor forget that there is a religion of God binding all men in a common bond of fellowship. To forget these things is but to court the fury of fate and defy the vengeance of Jehovah. The world cannot many times afford the cost of such bitter lessons from experience.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MORALE OF THE DYNAMIC RELIGION

“The gospel is not only reasonable; it is dynamic. And the sinless risen Lord is the concrete embodiment of the realities it contains. Without him as a real person in history, belief in the consonance of the spiritual life with the natural order and confidence in its supremacy to that order, would be but a justifiable hope and a working hypothesis. Possessed of him, this belief becomes a faith that will remove mountains.”—*“The Gospel and the Modern Man,” Shailer Mathews (The Macmillan Co).*



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE MORALE OF THE DYNAMIC RELIGION

WHAT is there about the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ that gives to his true followers their splendid morale? Furthermore, why are they, in the matter of the uplift of humanity, the most optimistic people in the world? It can plainly be seen why a merchant is enthusiastic in the sale of his wares or a land dealer in the sale of his lands. With them it is the promise of gain, the lure of wealth; but with the Christian it is often much work and little pay. He thinks of the welfare of others, not of himself. With high hopes and patient soul he spends his life when often, like his Lord, he has not where to lay his head. Talented, masterful men and brilliant, accomplished women have done this in all ages of Christianity and are doing so to-day. Why are they willing to make such a noble sacrifice?

It will not suffice simply to say that such Christians have caught the "enthusiasm of humanity" or that they have a vision of the "universal brotherhood of man" and are following that gleam. Theirs is a veritable *passion for Christ*, and their spirit cannot otherwise be explained.

With Christianity's underlying principles and her wonderful experience, is it not to be expected that some distinctive and superior morale should be manifested by her subjects? If as an institution Christianity were not different or better than other

religions, what claim would there be for its existence? Why cumbereth it the ground? Its right to existence is shown by fruits in the form of a superior Christian character. When our Lord said: "If you love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them," did he not indicate the chief feature of the morale of the kingdom—namely, that superior trait which alone would claim the confidence of mankind and dare make the demands necessary to make it a dominant force in the world? For the great tasks of the kingdom he knew that no ordinary investment must be made and only the noblest of character employed. In making this demand Christianity must demonstrate its worth by supplying that strength and grace which mankind needs and God wants to give us. In its intrinsic nature Christianity is based upon the principle of love, whose first work is to enrich and then commission.

### CHRISTIAN OPTIMISM

In analyzing the morale of Christianity the first element which arrests attention is its splendid optimism, the enthusiasm with which great tasks are attempted, and the persistence with which they are accomplished. No man possesses a more healthy enthusiasm than does the follower of our Jesus Christ. He is no "reed shaken by the wind." His is the spirit of the Master, the product of faith, and an exponent of his religion when rightly realized. The Christian man is logically an enthusiast; he could not well be otherwise. To him life is sweet; the present is joyous and the future radiant with

abundant promise. Then what is more natural than that he should be an optimist in religion, since the very foundations of hope are his?

That man is the master of his own life and the maker of his character is the foundation upon which all our moral world system stands. This fact applied gives coloring to the proverb that "the world is what we make it," good or bad. We see this fact demonstrated daily. If, then, the future, which is often foreboding to others, seems radiant to a brave-hearted Christian, must his judgment be discounted and his vision deemed a delusion? The spirit of the man makes the difference. That which is in reality dark to some is not so to him, because his point of view brings the best to view at all times and makes the future bright and beautiful. His manner of approaching men wins him friends, and his method of dealing with difficulties resolves the combination and the problem disappears. He fulfills the conditions which make for a great future, and his trust in God makes success a certainty. He himself being a "success" and the architect of his own fate, he wins out where others too often fail.

There is deep philosophy in all this. This real Christian is in the atmosphere of harmony. He is at peace with God, with his neighbor, and with himself, hence he lives a harmonious life and looks out upon life correctly. He has his struggles, but they develop character and lead to victory. He may have his trials, as do others, but he knows that without these character is impossible. So there are no discords in his life. He is in right relations with life and in tune with all things. Into such a relation the

Christian man came at the time of his new birth. Before that epochal event he felt that every element of his being was somehow out of order and something was wrong; for sin is always discordant, while righteousness is harmonious. His tastes were in a measure vicious, his ambitions bred forebodings, his paths were hidden, he suspected men, distrusted God, and had a dash of pessimism in his own soul. All this of course was due, not to a prearranged and fatalistic purpose in life all about him, but to the false attitude and character of the man. He made life what he found it to appear, and to his biased vision the future was dark and life a seeming mistake. Such a soul wages a losing warfare not only against the better interests of life, but against God himself. To him the future is justly fraught with gloom; it could not well be otherwise.

The Christian's optimistic view of life is eminently a correct one. This is God's world, and he made it according to his infinite wisdom. He intended this life to be desirable and sweet. To the eye that can behold it beauty is aglow everywhere in the world. There is music in abundance for every soul attuned to life's great melody. When our Saviour redeemed the soul he did not intend that evil should continue to dominate it and blight all its hopes. God did not create the world in a fit of displeasure, nor did he make beauty to adorn disgrace, nor the fruits of earth to pamper debauchery or to foster drunkenness. Nor did he intend that wealth should become a power to trample down the poor and helpless. God's idea of life is neither a carnival of lust nor a banquet of luxury. Both the present and the future



belong to God, and his children would do him dishonor not to trust his wisdom and be optimistic; therefore hopefulness is the right attitude of every child of God. When the Christian let God into his soul, in came also all that was radiant and beautiful, and his life was filled with the glory of God's infinite goodness and love. What else then could he be but optimistic, and what could his future be but bright with the promise of all that is intrinsically worth while? Such a view of life is no delusion growing out of a figment of fancy, but a rich reality of being.

*Jesus the Prince of Optimists*

The Scriptures everywhere present Christ as the "hope of the world." Since the Bible is the world's textbook of hope, joy, and love, setting forth these traits in great fullness, so Jesus, as the fulfillment of the Scriptures, is everywhere painted as the Prince of Optimists. He was himself the embodiment of his own teachings, and religious optimism was the morale of his great life, prominent at all times and under all circumstances. In making a brief of the facts of his teachings one must write down the following: Beauty of repentance, Heroism in the struggle for righteousness, Joy in sins forgiven, Triumph in attaining nobleness of character, Victory over the world, A passion for God, and The hope of everlasting life! These invest life always with an unsurpassed halo, yet they are the fruit of religion as Jesus taught it. They illumine life with undying splendor and beauty. The very mention of such things stirs the soul of the faithful Christian as the bugle call stirs the heart



of an old soldier. Their echo tingles like music in his soul.

While some have called Christ a dreamer, every one must admit that under all circumstances he was an optimist of the first rank. Every life must be weighed in the light of the times and the difficulties overcome. He was born of humble parentage; as a prophet he depended upon alms; during his active ministry he had not where to lay his head. But the barrenness of life did not embitter his character. "A sweet contentment of soul ever possessed him, and he was as a child in his Father's house." He never lost control of himself nor became the slave of circumstances. His highest gift to his disciples was a "banquet of peace." Notwithstanding the fact that he knew that the end was near and his betrayer was present, the atmosphere of the Upper Room was surcharged with joy. So uplifted was he amid the turmoils of the mockery of a trial that Pilate was amazed. Even while hanging upon the Cross he showed no resentment, but prayed for his persecutors and made provision for the care of his bereft mother. Nothing embitters ordinary men like utter poverty and social injustice, yet Jesus bore them with radiance of soul. In the shadow of the cross, waiting for his crucifixion, he is strangely confident of success. "My kingdom is not of this world, else my disciples would resort to the sword." In the gloom of that cyclone of horrors which awaited him and the trial of his disciples' faith, he said to them: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me"—as he who shall accomplish redemption and reveal immortality—believe in me and wait results!

Pagan poets have placed the "golden age" in the far distant past; it was the glory of Isaiah to imagine a kingdom which would be established by outward sanction of authority; but it was the achievement of Jesus to set up the kingdom of heaven within the heart with the eternal sanction of love. "He was the first to assert that the only bondage a man needs to fear is sin; that no man needs be a slave to sin unless he himself so wills; that freedom from sin is perfect liberty; and that every one could enter heaven by retiring into a calm and loving soul."<sup>1</sup>

The highest reach of optimism hitherto had dared to conceive only of a state of physical comfort and placed that far away; but Jesus proclaimed a kingdom of holiness at hand—"The kingdom of heaven is within you"—and he dared to proclaim this "good news" when the Jewish rule was a hollow mockery and the pagan world a seething mass of corruption. In the light of calculating reason all this was the very extravagance of optimism, this forecast of Christianity's vitality and achievement.

#### A LIFE WITH A FUTURE

Of all men the Christian man has a future. This was most characteristic of Christ. In all his teachings nothing was more evident or beautiful than his faith in the future of his kingdom. He believed in his Heavenly Father, in himself, and in the future of the human family. In a dark hour he said to his disciples: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And in the

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<sup>1</sup>"The Mind of the Master," John Watson. (George H. Doran Co.)

very atmosphere of the cross on which he had just been crucified he said: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Could a faith in the future be more sublime?

That soul which has no future toward which he turns, in which he lives and in whose radiant light he walks, is dead even while he lives. But Christ was not dead, and down to the present his heroes have never been dead, and they never will be. To the buoyant, healthful soul, with a faith all aglow with the instincts of immortality, what is so sweet as the dawn of each new day and each new era in the world's history? To such a soul the past may seem dull and the present irksome, but the future ever thrills with joyous hope. We turn from the thoughts of a fruitless day to revel in the delights of a rosy-tinted twilight, knowing it to be a promise of a fair to-morrow toward which we are borne on the wings of sweet slumber. In that fair to-morrow, unseen though it be, no sorrow ever comes, no friendship ever fails. We people that land with the folk of our fancy, and we exclude the untrue, the unkind, and the angular. What treasures are there for all—homes for the homeless, health for the sickly, plenty for the poor! There we meet no frowns nor deal with the commonplace world of to-day.

This is not all daydream. God has planted deep in human nature the spirit of optimism. By day and by night the toilers of this task-ridden world find time to glide out past golden piers to hoist silken sails and float on fancy's sea with never a cloud in her sky or a storm to ruffle her serene bosom, there

to dream of a fair existence hedged about by fancy's curtains from the rude touch of the real. How blessed this privilege of liberating oneself from the turmoils of the day and, with anticipating hands, plucking flowers from the garden of the future, fresh, sweet, and beautiful! Earth has no purer joy than this nor humanity a surer evidence of native greatness. It is this element in the Christian man's life that makes him different from others.

In pronouncing a eulogy over the body of his brother lying in his casket, Robert G. Ingersoll said: "Life is a narrow vale 'twixt the cold and barren peaks of two eternities"—which may have seemed true to him. For if the past lent no fragrance of sweet memories, surely the future held but little balm for his broken heart, unbeliever that he was. Yet in his very next breath he said: "Hope sees a star in the night, and listening love hears the rustle of wings in the air." What love and hope? It is only the Christian's hope that sees in the twinkle of the stars in the night the jeweled finger prints of God's watch care.

If, as some men say, "all progress is divine," may we not read in this instinct of futurity in the morale of the Christian the very impulse of God himself leading us on to the better things in store? Surely such a life of hopefulness is in accord with the gracious will of God. He who has planned will surely lead us on to the waiting harvest time where fruitage abounds.

#### EVIL WITHOUT A FUTURE

While righteousness, using gold and precious stone, builds upon the rock to abide, evil builds upon the



sand, to endure but for a season and go down in the storms. In its very nature sin is a predatory and destructive fact which begets strife and ends in suicide. Its fundamental principle is selfishness, the one disintegrating force in the universe and the constant cause of discord. Its symbol is the mother eagle who snatched the sacrifice from the altar and bore it to her hungry nestlings, to find a little later her nest in flames which consumed her young while she swooped and screamed about the flaming pyre in terror. A live coal from the altar had adhered to the flesh and set her nest on fire. Such is the fatality of evil. It may defy laws and for a while override justice, but its doom is sure. It is remarkable to what extent this fact has been found true in the history of individuals and nations of late. No principle of science could have been more thoroughly established. The struggle has often been fierce and long, with evil deeply entrenched in human depravity, backed by long-standing precedent and fortified by millions of money; but as God lived the end came, as it should! Beneath the focused rays of withering truth evil could not continue the hopeless strife. Evil's future is never bright; its votaries are never optimistic, and its feats are never heroic. Its principles bring forth despair, not hope. All the enforced enthusiasm or pretended science imaginable could not have made the American liquor traffic justifiable or given permanence to the militarist's dream of world dominance. Such things are contrary to the divine plans. The sea currents of life are against them; hence all seeming progress is a constant struggle against fate. But not so with



the Christian man, and it can easily be seen why he is optimistic. He has not to fight against nature's winds, but to sail joyfully with them.

Compared with the empty struggles of ambition for individual supremacy, how splendid are the achievements of the heroes of the Cross? Their motives are of the highest. In the gift of themselves for the uplift of humanity, self is forgotten in the glow of coming victory seen from afar. They die; but the tomb of each hero is a stepping-stone to a larger, freer life. What could be finer than the morale of the soldiers of the Cross on the firing line of the world's vanguard? With the promise of victory in the distance, they swerve not and are never surer of a triumph than when the sky is darkest or the battle waging hottest. In it all, like the great apostle, they "thank God and take courage."

It is just this spirit that made heroes of the young believers at Pentecost and enabled them to stem the popular fury and espouse a cause destined to lift mankind to a higher plane of religious thinking and living. This same spirit aglow in the soul of the martyrs enabled the aged Hugh Latimer to say to his companion at the stake as the flames gathered about them: "Be brave, Brother Ridley, and play the man. We shall light a candle in England to-day which the ages shall never put out." And they did. From that time forth the fires of persecution died down and were never again rekindled.

#### LIFE WITH A DEFINITE PROGRAM

The high morale of Christianity is due, as much as to anything else, to the splendid task set before the

Christian. Every great cause must have a great ideal as the source of inspiration and center of action. Only with a righteous cause can the world's best be accomplished. Before the Christian is set the highest and noblest of tasks, and with the enthusiasm born of faith and love he bends himself to the great accomplishment which holds him true to his best endeavor. Where is there a more inspiring task in which to invest one's life? Men everywhere seem fascinated by the charms of worldly, selfish pursuits; but when sifted down, where is the abiding value? What ultimate worth can there be in the ceaseless round of pleasure seeking or money getting, forever marking time but getting nowhere? Men speak of the fascination of accumulating a fortune and call the amassing of wealth "a great game"; but when the only ideal is just to be rich, forgetful of the world's crying needs while enjoying the personal glory of being "one of the world's millionaires," the high enthusiasm completely disappears. Such a life is rapidly coming to be looked upon with merited disfavor. Such wealth is too often not only a source of political corruption, but an actual menace to society, endangering the very foundations of our national life.

Our Saviour pointed out very clearly the dangers of riches to those who trust in them, which include the loss of the finer sensibilities, the acquiring of a Shylock character, and the hanging of useless wealth like a millstone about the neck of the rich. What glory can there be in the ceaseless grind in making more money to buy more stocks to make more money, and so on *ad infinitum*? What great

thought can there be in such a life, what inspiration, what heroism? Of such a pursuit the great Teacher once said: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?" But when wealth is sought and used as a means of human betterment in public benefits and social redemption, then it is that the possessor becomes not a society wrecker, but indeed a "world builder!"

Christianity inspires the finest spirit because it is a religion with a splendid purpose and a definite program. Its Founder himself was the embodiment of just this spirit. With no great organization to which he could look, no array of bayonets or big bank account back of him, but with only the faithful eleven about him, he issued his great commission, "Go ye into all the world," thus looking to the far future and incomparable task of a conquest of the world. Where in all the history of endeavor is there finer than this? With such a program and leadership as his, what wonder that the untried apostles became heroes of the first rank, to the subversion of empires and the overthrow of strongholds. Theirs was a sword which spilled no blood while safeguarding the rights of men. Theirs is the matchless morale of love; theirs the victory of peace. What age or nation can resist such a force when wisely applied? Always such a soldiery gains the confidence of mankind and finds the winds of heaven in its favor. Such a triumph is not the result of haphazard nor the fruit of chance, but the result of a definite program and persistent purpose.

## THE TASK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

The task to be accomplished is to make world-wide the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ—the redemption of human character. “There is a growing conviction,” says Cuthburt Hall, “that the religion of Christ has about it a central element which constitutes the very essence of religion. This is not to be discovered by reducing it to its final residuum, but by taking it as a whole. The fullness of the Godhead is in it; the unspeakable gift of God, the depth of the riches of divine grace, the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the depths and heights and breadth and length of love are all there. The growing appreciation of the Biblical content and the broadening scope of Christian experience are disclosing the vast proportions of these universal and permanent elements of Christian religion.”<sup>2</sup> To realize the worth of such a religion and to bring all the world to do the same is the program set before the followers of our Lord, and such a task is sufficient to win the most heroic attachment.

By the compelling power of his love Christ’s followers have gone on working year in and year out, often with little or no apparent results, but upheld and inspired by a lofty sense of duty and by their faith in a God of love, who in his own good time will send the harvest. This faith alone enables men to face with calm courage the stupendous difficulties which lie across their pathway and triumph in spite of them all.

Ours is a gospel which makes heroic demands upon

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<sup>2</sup>“Universal Element of the Christian Religion,” p. 126. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)



us. To be faithful to this demand requires the abandonment of a true soldier. All self must be forgotten and only the great task remembered. In spite of the ease-loving streak in human nature, it is the difficult which charms, the great deeds that catch the attention of men. Christianity has at its very heart the principle of sacrifice, and that means the *gift of self*—it may mean death. Recent events have shown that the Cross still has its ancient appeal when it is given the right of way. The response to the call for recruits to defend our precious heritage of liberty in the World War has taught the Church an immortal lesson in its approach to men. It is the difficult task that charms; to soften and cheapen Christianity is to kill it. That young Chinaman who said that he “preferred Christianity to Buddhism, because it is easier; for to be a true Buddhist one has to study,” laid bare, like a flash of lightning in the darkness, an imminent peril to Christianity—superficiality, the substitution of cheapness for reality and spiritual worth. The history of triumphant Christianity is the story of true heroism; and as long as this continues our religion will take the world. But abandon the difficult and heroic and her banners will droop and the fires of heraldry go out on the hilltops of life. Only a heroic Christianity can save this self-indulgent chaotic age, surrounded by its mountains of difficulties.

The heroic is the law of spiritual life. When the rich young ruler came to our Lord asking, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” it seemed distressing to tell him to “Go, sell, . . . and give to the poor; and come, follow me”; but our Lord knew



what was best for him, and he also knew the laws of spiritual life. We give that we may be enriched; my lamp never dimmed by lighting another's; we "keep our secret" by imparting it to others; we die to the world that we may live unto God. By just this seeming paradox the kingdom of heaven is established.

"The gospel is greater because it is not ours exclusively. It is the larger and more precious because of the wider ownership. Ours is not only a joint ownership with men, but a copartnership with God, in the sense that we are coworkers with him." As all real converts to Christ have realized, the first impulse of the forgiven soul is to tell the good news to some one else and have him to participate in the same joy. This is the instinctive obligation of love. Failing to impart our religion to others, it withers like famished flowers in our grasp. The world-wide proclamation of the great truth not only fulfills the great command, but it enriches the soul with the greatest joy. These two facts, *duty done* and *rejoicing*, go hand in hand in accomplishing the program of Christ.

The world has lost interest in a religion merely of individual salvation. It is too narrow and selfish and lacks the altruism of Jesus. All self-centered religion soon reaches the dead line in its own career in failing to detect the great task set before all Christians, which is to reclaim our brothers so that all may be one family in Christ Jesus. This is enough to command, as it did so definitely in Jesus's day, the strongest of living men—this establishing of the kingdom of righteousness! "Close up, friends of

God! Here is a campaign worthy of your best soldiers of the Cross!" We are not guardians of a conventional piety; but we are champions of a power which makes for the redemption of the world. Ours is not the faith of "asceticism, which calls the world bad and flees from it"; but rather the reverse, a faith for which the world is waiting, a faith which sees the world as it is and sets vigorously to work making it better. To proclaim the message of love to all the world, to make real the power of God unto salvation—this is the task of the kingdom, a program which inspires a splendid spirit. What wonder that it awakens that heroic morale which will not die?

The enthusiasm of Christianity is at its highest in the white heat of evangelism, in the immediate work of the salvation of souls. The noblest example of the heroism of the Cross is seen among pioneers at work in the most distant lands and among the most degraded of humanity in the darkest corners of earth. The story of the deeds of such souls keeps the altar fires aglow in the hearts of the Churches. But for them and the magical story of their deeds the individual Church members would lapse into desuetude, "playing at precedence with their next-door neighbors," while the earth is torn by cruel wars and precious souls perish for lack of light and love.

Where there is a recognized great objective and a vision of the splendid program of the kingdom, there is possible that daring which will attempt a conquest of the world for Christ and consider any other task unworthy of the high attention of a redeemed humanity.

## A FULL ENLISTMENT

Two things are necessary for living a great life: (1) A great cause to which one may fully commit himself and (2) the full enlistment of all his powers in that cause.

It is only when we have fully committed ourselves to our Lord and are willing to let him have his way with us that the purpose of redemption and God's plans in human life can be accomplished. To such souls God opens up the vistas of the future, and this in turn begets the high optimism of Christianity. This is not a matter simply of temperament; it is the vision of God begotten by faith in him. God lifts the curtains of the future and lets men see things to come and feel the thrill of such a vision, as into such a cause they commit the whole of their powers. Thus it was that young Abraham broke with all that was humanly dear and "went out, not knowing whither he went; . . . for he looked for a city . . . whose builder and maker is God." In that vision was penciled the organized and settled tribes when the nomadic days were done. His "journeying" was of God, and in that vision of the noble young patriot lay in embryo the ground plans of our Christian civilization as built upon a permanent foundation.

From the obligations begotten of this call of God Abraham kept back nothing, and to it he held himself ever true, fully confident that "his seed should be multiplied as the stars in the heavens, and in his seed all nations should be blessed." His close "friendship with God" made that vision to become possible, and with the morale begotten by faith as

the dominant force in his life he journeyed westward without a discord in his soul or doubt of the final accomplishment of his fair dream.

When "in the fullness of time" this vision was coming to flower and marvelous things were happening, Peter joyfully records his life enlistment as follows: "Thanks be unto God, who hath begotten us again by the resurrection to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Thus he reënlisted in the Master's cause and became the hero-captain of the Cross. Rallying the scattered forces, he assailed the mob who but a few weeks before had crucified his Lord and put him to open shame; sending conviction to their hearts, he in a single day converted thousands to the despised cause and opened the kingdom to the Gentile world.

More wonderful still is the story of the great apostle and expounder of the faith, who went telling the good news "from round about Jerusalem even unto Illyricum," regardless of unspeakable perils, that all, "from the least unto the greatest," might know Christ. This was the measure of his objective and the extent of his enlistment. And while twenty centuries have crossed the periscope of his vision, St. Paul is still the apostle of the world's highest hopes and the herald of the Messiah's kingdom. "That I may know him" was the goal of his ambition, the keynote of his great accomplishments; and to this he brought a morale which was never broken, though beset by perils which, but for the fact that they were recorded by his inerrant pen, might be called the most extravagant fiction of religious literature. His noble optimism still in-



spires the heroism of the age, and his morale is the wonder of the world. Such a life history mankind will not willingly let die.

That Christian men should be enthusiastic propagandists of their own religion stands not only as an item of the teaching of their Lord; it is also an element of his religion. Having felt the thrill of new life in their own souls and having verified its reality in their own living, they, like Jerry McAuley and Rodney (Gipsy) Smith, never tire of telling the great truth to listening and hungry multitudes. It is indeed fit for world declaration. All men need its benefits, and no joy is so sweet as that felt by one while lifting dying men into newness of life and fellowship with God. This soul-stirring new life within, together with a splendid objective, makes all such men the most enthusiastic advocates of the Master's kingdom. They tell no cunningly devised fable, but the glowing message of spiritual life. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," is still the message of the Cross.

Such men have ever been the world's greatest statesmen, in the sense of being men of vision, men who look far into the future and are not concerned with passing events only, but with the abiding needs of humanity, and are builders for all time. To such men Francis Bacon applied the name of "men of longanimity," and such indeed they are, as they adjust present plans to far-distant accomplishments in world uplift. How great is the need of just such men in the field of Christian service to-day, with their power to foresee the development of present tendencies and the outcome of forces silently at

work. Sir William Ramsey pointed out the fact that St. Paul thought in terms of provinces, and his aims embraced the conquest of the Roman Empire, which would mean ultimately the entire world. He saw with that vision which "gives life a perspective and atmosphere, which confers distinction upon action, which makes politics statesmanship and literature prophecy."

Men everywhere crave an opportunity, a field for worthy activity; but one would scarcely select darkest Africa as a place to become famous. Yet, David Livingstone won there his world-wide reputation as a pioneer of the kingdom of Christ. He not only won lasting fame for himself, but turned the eyes of Christendom to that seething mass of unsaved, degraded humanity. From the beginning of time men have worshiped heroes. Of old they tracked Julius Cæsar across Gaul by the fields he laid waste and the villages he burned; but they will follow Livingstone across the Dark Continent by the light towers he established in that benighted land—the waste places which have become bowers of beauty and the deserts which have become Gardens of Eden. To our ease-loving age and visionless churches, the history of Livingstone came telling that the age of noble deeds is not dead. If to the careless multitude in Africa the story of Livingstone has become as a "cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night," leading them out of heathen bondage, his influence upon the self-satisfied churches was no less powerful and inspiring.

In 1842 he first set foot upon African soil, and for fifteen years he labored practically alone for the

uplift of that degraded race of mankind. In 1857 he landed back in England, the most famous individual in all the British Empire. After being lionized by all England, with a popularity which surpassed that of the nation's greatest statesman, he, in his gentle Scotch modesty, hid himself away in his native home in Scotland to write out the story of his "Missionary Travels." This he did in the hope of securing means for another expedition to Africa; "for," said he, "so far as my calling is concerned, the end of my geographical feats is only the beginning of my missionary enterprise."

What but the grip of the kingdom, the impelling force of love, could have held him to such a task and given him such invincible morale through all those years of perils almost surpassing human belief? He had no thought of the spectacular or dream of fame. His sole aim was to do the will of Him who had called him and to finish the task assigned him. In this his courage never failed. In his labors he saw in the distance, not an Africa to be exploited and a race to be made captives and sold into slavery; but in that vision he saw the beauty of an uplifted and glory-clad Africa as a powerful Christianized race crowned with the dream of manhood. And when the history of that accomplished fact shall have been written, Livingstone's name will stand as the Apostle of the Dark Continent, and his star will appear with undimmed luster of no less magnitude than that of the Apostle Paul.

How great is the contagion of character! When Livingstone's life work was done and his body

brought home for interment, the promoters of Africa prevailed upon Henry M. Stanley to return to the continent that had made him gray and take up the scientific task of his fallen chieftain. He advertised for forty young lieutenants to accompany him, saying that most of them would leave their bones in Africa without wealth or renown. "Come," said he, "dare the great adventure, endure and die, perhaps to be forgotten." The next morning twelve hundred thronged his door, regretting, like Nathan Hale, that they "had but one life to give."

But will the Cross find such response to-day? Go ask the fifteen hundred and more missionaries actually at work in Africa to-day. Ask of Robert Laws and those who came after him—Mackay, "Uganda's Man of Work," also Jean Kenyon MacKenzie and the army of noble women who follow in her "trail." Go, part the shoulder-high grass on the banks of the great Congo, and with lifted hat read the inscription on the tomb of Alabama's noblest son, Samuel J. Lapsley, who in the flower of young manhood laid down his heroic life, not for Africa's wealth, but for the uplift of her countless swarthy millions. Ask about the late Walter Russell Lambuth, who tramped a thousand miles across the wastes to Wembo Nyama and back to establish a life-saving station there. Ask also of Prof. John Wesley Gilbert, D.D., gentleman of color and companion to Bishop Lambuth, who uttered as noble a sentiment as history records. Said he: "If a spear or bullet ever reaches you, Bishop, it will have passed through my body first." By the hands of thousands at work there to-day—



frail women not a few among them—the banners of the cross are kept gayly afloat on the breezes of heaven's promises of the coming day. In all ages of Christendom the pioneers of the Cross have been and are still the vanguards of heralding of hope on the outposts of civilization—the morning stars of God's new age and greater world era.

Religious enthusiasm in a bad cause is always evil and a breeder of strife; but in a righteous cause it is the very salt of the ages. God's plans find expression in the daring of men of such enthusiasm, and the progress of humanity finds in the men and women who possess it a ready vehicle as a means of accomplishing its purpose and winning its victories.

#### FAITH THE VICTORY

Sum up as we may the fruits of the traits of the Christian morale, the list will not be complete without the story of its achievements by *faith*. "This is the victory which overcomes the world," the secret of vision which has given the future its wonderful pull in human character and strengthened the human heart for prolonged struggle and final triumph. Yet it was Thomas Huxley, at whose shrine so many bow, who said in his "Lay Sermons" that "faith was the cardinal sin of science." This is one of the foolish notions and careless statements too often found in the history of great men, making it pertinent for Mr. Romanes in his "Thoughts on Religion" to retort: "What a hell science would have made of the world if she had abolished the 'spirit of faith' even in human relations!"

The world can never pay its debt to the men of faith. Without faith—faith in themselves, in the future, and in God, the source and giver of all real triumph—how could the wonders of human progress ever have been accomplished? Ours is the greatest of all ages, yet there was a time when the wonders of our age, of science even, were undreamed of, and when such conceptions often stole into the minds of men as mere dreams. But for the spirit of faith leading to the investment of mental powers in the accomplishment of such far-off fancies, what would our age be to-day? It was faith in the nature of man which fixed the “star of empire” in its westward course; faith that led Columbus across the trackless seas to “stub his toe against the Western Hemisphere.” Faith in the Puritan Fathers led them to plant the gospel in the New World and wrest an empire from the grasp of foolish King George; and their sons “by faith” wrote for us the greatest governmental document ever bequeathed to man. It was faith in the heart of Cyrus Field that enabled him to collect \$5,000,000 from his New York audience before breakfast, which made possible the laying of the Atlantic cable to belt the globe with the flash of intelligence and anchor the continents of earth in the harbor of New York. Faith in the accomplishment of the “still greater task” pushed the explorer to the uttermost parts of the earth, to sound its ocean’s depths and scale its loftiest mountains and stake off its continents and islands on the map of intelligence. But a still greater faith fires the soul of the children of God’s household with a desire to give to the benighted

millions of earth the Lamp of Light and the Bread of Life.

These men of faith, men who could trust God and dare to do his will, have been the heroes of an illustrious past and are to-day the harbingers of a still more illustrious future. It is when men approach the throne of God with a faith which says, "It shall be done," that God is able to accomplish his purposes through human instrumentality. In such men we discover the high morale of Christianity, in whom is manifested not "great acting," but "greatness in action," and this we know is true heroism. Such men go forward with an unshaken confidence in the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God, and are sustained by a faith entrenched in the promise: "Lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world." It is through such men that God brings his marvelous purposes to pass.

Nothing short of such full enlistment and such trust can measure up to the fullness of redemption or meet its obligations. Nothing else would be pleasing to God. Just such traits as these—namely, spiritual optimism, the enlistment of all one's powers, and a definite program with the compelling power of faith—make Christianity the most dynamic force in life and religion a most blessed reality. In summing it all up let it be said, *Christianity is spiritual life.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### CHRISTIANITY: THE ULTIMATE RELIGION



### HIS ULTIMATE DOMINION

“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”—*Philippians ii. 10, 11.*

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### HIS ULTIMATE GLORY

“Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, . . . heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne . . . forever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshiped him that liveth forever and ever.”—*Revelation v. 13, 14.*

## CHAPTER XIV

### CHRISTIANITY: THE ULTIMATE RELIGION

THAT Christianity is the ultimate religion is not an afterthought of theology; it is inwoven with the very texture of the teachings of Jesus. Yet it was a most difficult thought for the disciples to realize. Even after having grasped the idea that the kingdom of heaven is not of this world, it was next to impossible to convince them that the religion of Jesus was **not** ethnical and redemption was not confined to the Jews or to any one nation, but was world-wide in its nature and application and sought the salvation of all mankind. Peter was no doubt the best equipped of all the disciples, yet it required the house-top vision at Joppa, when the sheet was let down out of heaven, to convince him that "God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."<sup>1</sup> That which to us in this far-off day is the crowning feature of Christianity was to the Jews in Jesus's time a thought most unthinkable.

From the first the newly outpoured Holy Spirit broke over the walls of long-standing Jewish prejudices and began its world-wide sweep. Yet in all ages of Christianity this same human narrowness and prejudice has had to be broken down. Men have always been slow to realize this one essential of the Christian religion, that Jesus was a world-citizen, the ideal for every nation and a contemporary

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<sup>1</sup>Acts x. 34, 35.

of every age, the inspiration of all classes and the brother of every individual. His religion is never out of date, and the gospel seed germinates in any soil and bears a native fruit in every race.

Christ's confidence in his own gospel was such as to warrant his great command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Now, what shall be the final outcome of this world-wide enterprise? The estimate of a great leader rests not so much upon the brilliancy of his utterances or deeds as upon the ultimate fruit of his teachings. Christ rested his entire future on this foundation. He did not strive to convince men by the cogency of logic. He rarely argued with men, but threw out the challenge, "Every tree is known by its fruits," or "Wisdom is justified by all her children." On this basis he was willing to risk the entire future of his kingdom. The tree may be of slow growth, but the future will justify its existence because of its fruit. In this test Jesus has withstood the bitter persecutions of the ages and to-day throws his banners to the breezes in a challenge to a conquest of the world.

### A WORLD RELIGION

But what is there in Christianity to lead one to conclude that it is a world religion, or that of the many religions of earth it is best suited to the needs of men in all ages and in all lands? How may men in the non-Christian countries be made to feel that the "white man's religion" is better suited to them than the traditional faith wherein they were born? When it is remembered how long the Far Eastern civilizations have existed and how deeply they are

intrenched in their pagan faith, it can readily be seen that there must be potent reasons for the change of faith if these countries are ever to be Christianized and lifted to a higher civilization. The fruit of the new faith must be made apparent. Its worth must be real.

This is not simply a question of religious propaganda; it is an essential fact in the life and future of Christianity. Is the religion of Jesus superior to all other faiths? or shall the time ever come when the banners of Christ shall give place to those of pagan beliefs? If there are better and greater truths than the Christian faith, would it not be right and best to adopt them and let our Christianity be forgotten? Who can be satisfied with less than the best in matters of faith? Such a thought as this is not merely a question of religious rivalry. Nor is it a pride of belief which stirs us to active inquiry. Souls alive to eternal interests prefer not to follow an *ignis fatuus* through life only to be denied admission to a place with the redeemed in glory.

Considering only the general trend of history and seeing that the shores of time are strewn with the wrecks of institutions that have perished, some men are wont to say glibly enough: "Christianity will pass away. Other religions have flourished and have died, and the same fate in the process of time awaits Christianity. Why should there not arise one greater than Christ? and why should he not establish a religion as much greater than Christianity as that is greater than all others, so that Christianity shall go the way of all the earth?"

To answer this dogmatically would require the



finest prophetic spirit and the divining of that which God himself has not revealed. But are there not elements in Christianity which reassure its abiding nature, and is there not a world-wide potency about it? One does not proceed far in the comparative study of religions to discover the evident superiority of the Christian belief over all others. But who has forgotten the uneasy sensation that was felt at the first thought of bringing Christianity into comparison with other religions of the earth? What a sense of the incongruous was felt in contemplating the comparison of our spiritual finer-fibered Christianity with the grosser, more superstitious faiths of paganism! Much distress was felt in conservative circles lest any serious interest in non-Christian religions, long denounced as false, might impair the supremacy of the Christian religion. It was thought that to treat with respect the religion of the Far East was to pay tribute to Satan and rob Christ of his crown. But the foreboding was not fulfilled. The pagan religions all have their worth, or they could not have lived. Christianity is not to be built up by pulling down all other faiths.

The chief benefit that scientific study of religion has given to the world has been, not only to expose the insufficiencies of other religions, but to show the enduring superiority of Christianity. The universal religious phenomena have been frankly admitted and an impartial comparison of their modes of expression considered as a necessary condition of the knowledge of the race. The study of the philosophy and history of religion, while it has destroyed many prejudices, corrected many false opinions, and

brought to light many admirable features of the religious life beyond the confines of Christianity, has shown most clearly the point at which the pagan religions fall short of the power for the thorough transformation of character—and this alone is salvation.

### THE RELIGION OF LIFE

Our Saviour's own declaration of himself was: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

While Christianity teaches the suppression of animalism, of all worldliness, and inculcates "keeping the body under and bringing it into subjection" as an essential to spiritual supremacy, the religions of the Far East teach the disregard of all human life as the highest attainment in religion. Students of comparative religions tell us that in reading the Vedas one is impressed with the vastness of duration and the enormous lengths assigned to material objects. "The earth is described as a plain whose diameter is 170,000,000 miles, and we read in another place of a mountain 60 miles high. We are of a period of duration 4,000 million of million of years."<sup>2</sup> Such calculations stagger the imagination and defy the powers of computation, yet they have their roots not in the poetic imagination, but in the prosy reality of the nothingness of human life. The outward universe, appearing invulnerable by time, becomes an object of reverence; while individual life, so transitory and futile, becomes an object of contempt. Hence in the Asiatic's view it becomes

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<sup>2</sup>"The Originality of Christ," George Matheson. (American Tract Society.)

his religious duty to yield up his petty being to the abiding life of Nature and to desire no other life but its life, no immortality but what Nature enjoys. "It was this, implicitly contained in Brahminism, that ultimately broke forth with startling power in the creed of Gautama Buddha." In his "Light of Asia" Sir Edwin Arnold grows quite eloquent over the case of an old Brahmin saint who threw herself down to be devoured by a lank, famished wolf in which she fancied the embodied spirit of some illustrious ancestor. This deed the poet would have rival in vicarious beauty our Saviour's gift of his life upon the Cross for the sins of the world, as being done in the cosmic spirit of self-giving. While seemingly done in the noble spirit of sacrifice, it was really a homage to Nature, made because life was deemed not worth living. Such was the teaching of her religion. The noblest act of a Brahmin saint is to surrender individual life and be absorbed back into the great Nirvana of eternal rest—as a drop of water falling back into the ocean. Buddha considered the goal of all human blessedness to be emancipation from all desires. We hear him say: "Life is will, will is egoism, egoism is desire, and desire is misery." Hence the highest hope of man is the extinction of separate individual life.

Such a philosophy is intensified pessimism. Buddha speaks; but the whole life of the world is against him. He is exalted, he is gracious, full of pity and benign; but from the Christian's viewpoint, he is the victim of an immeasurable and hideous mistake. Such a religion has had its ideals and its heroes, but is without power over evil. To-day paralysis is

upon the heart of Indian civilization. Social progress is not the part of a Hindu's dream. Science in the true sense of the word, there is none in the land of Buddha. Universal education there is none. "Such achievements in science, in philosophy, in government, in institutional life as are found in the West, there are none. Profound and metaphysical dreamings constitute the huge system of opinion. Imagination takes the place of intellect, prejudice displaces conscience, and endless broodings the will."<sup>3</sup> This is where the contempt of life has held sway for centuries. It is scarcely necessary to indicate the superiority of Christianity over Buddhism, which perhaps is the greatest of the pagan faiths.

The supremacy of Christianity among the religions of mankind rests upon the verdict of life. Christ declared to the world: "I am the light of the world." Wherever that light shines there is newness of life. In Christ's presence all contempt of life disappears, and the sigh for relief from distress in death is forgotten. Where he is, the hum of human interest becomes universal. Men forget their unbeliefs in the joy of living. Wherever he has gone existence has become a passion, and his disciples are filled with the "surprise of being." They who know and serve him best say: "O, I have just begun to live." In the nations who want to live there is no rival to the religion of Christ. He not only claimed a conquest of the world when he uttered the great commission, "Go ye into all the world," but pledges his life-giving presence and

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<sup>3</sup>"Ultimate Conceptions of Faith." G. A. Gordon, p. 266. (Houghton Mifflin Co.)



proffers grace supreme wherever souls have burdens and hearts have pain. Because the instinct of life is ineradicable and the desire to live prevails more and more whenever life is normal, the religion of Christ, which is the religion of life, must prevail.

### THE RELIGION OF LOVE

Again, the religion of Jesus is the religion for all mankind because it is the religion of a holy love. The God of Christ is the God of Love. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Where Egoism says, "Life is desire and desire is misery. The highest virtue is the scorn of life"—and that is suicidal—Christianity says: "Life is divine, is love, and love is joyful, is optimistic, and is radiant with eternal hope." Not to desire the permanence of a joyful existence is anti-Christian and insane in principle. The high mission of Christ was to fill all the world with the passion of a holy love and abiding life and joy.

It was perhaps the most brilliant achievement of Christ that in projecting a conquest of the world he threw himself upon the waves of "the earliest, strongest, and deepest passion of nature," and applied its dynamics to his high cause. He saw, what others seem to have overlooked, that there is the power house of a world enterprise, that holy love "conquers distance, outlives all ages, and bears up beneath the strains of the most divers opinions." He summons this passion to meet the severest tests of faith. For the first time in history he weds righteousness and holy passion, and himself becomes

the embodiment of the united forces. Through the hearts of his disciples he sent the thrill of his own love, and they became one with him. He makes unqualified demands upon his followers on the ground that their love and allegiance to him will bear them up in their obedience. To love him was to be righteousness; but to deny him was the highest disobedience, was to forfeit all. He that would not leave all and follow him was not worthy to be his disciple. This "forsaking all" has its hardships, but it had also its compensation, its glorification in the sweetest divine companionship.

While righteousness is the foundation principle and first word in Christianity, it is by no means the last word. Jesus plainly taught that the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven must exceed the old righteousness of the day, but the new religion blossomed into a fairer flower. Righteousness is a forensic principle, a matter to be adjusted by the judges. The religion of Jesus is an impulse of the heart, a soul warmth that waits for no man to adjust. This as a principle had been largely overlooked in religion. Love was the word which Jesus gathered from the scattered pages of the ancient law in setting forth the principles of his kingdom. With this word he met the challenge: "Which is the greatest commandment?" With it also he answered the question, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" It is the supreme word in all his ethical teachings and is aglow in the writings of the apostles. St. Paul gives it priority as the greatest of virtues (1 Cor. xiii.), and St. John gives it setting as follows: "Beloved,

let us love one another; for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God." (1 John iv. 7.)

That principle which Jesus broadcast by use of the word "love" is not that saccharine sentimentality and parasitic clinging which is so detrimental when mixed in religion to-day, but (Ἀγαπή) that profound something which is most vital, that sublime principle which St. Paul places above all else when he says: "I am persuaded, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, . . . nor things present, nor things to come, . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."<sup>4</sup> Following the line of this love, which is "the fulfilling of the law," we arrive at righteousness, which is the correlative of love. With Christ a loveless righteousness is an impossibility. Following the line of duty, we emerge into love—not a sickly sentiment, but a virile, rational, authoritative principle. By seeking first the righteousness of God's kingdom we find the love of Christ. Thus we discover that love is writ large in all the teachings of Jesus. It was this principle aglow in all his acts and words that made his religion so real and vital and, since reality administers to life, so blessed when applied to the life of to-day. On this principle Jesus would dare enlist men and commission them to the accomplishment of his kingdom.

### *God Is Known Through Love*

It is the glory of Christianity that it is a religion born of a power which leads to a knowledge of God and fellowship with him. It is through the avenue

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<sup>4</sup>Romans viii. 38, 39.

of love that we may really come to know God. Certain scientists tell us that it is impossible to know God and that we must let the quest alone forever. Says one: "I have searched the heavens for years and have not found God." True, God cannot be found that way. We do not test friendship by the stethoscope, nor find God by the telescope, nor by material analysis. But we may know God as we know man; not by dissection, but by a higher method. We know man by the touch of his genius, by the breadth of his wisdom and the force of his love. The secret of the knowledge of God is not so far away as the untamed ambition and intellectual pride of men would have it be; but is within reach of the hand of daily kindness and the heart of daily love. Love begets love and answers to love; and as God is love, so here is the one source of the knowledge of God. Love is not felt for a doctrine, or awakened by a miracle, but by a person. The love of Christ is not a vague ecstasy, but a living power, the application of one man's life force to the life of another in need, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Here our Lord planted himself. Love to God was the greatest law, and to love one's neighbor was like unto it. Such an affection awakened not the spirit of the bondservant, but of sonship. If the Christian religion were primarily doctrine, it might have been taught by a book, by a system, not by a Saviour as a person to a person. But as a contagious spirit of power Christ would send it to the uttermost parts of the earth.



## AN INSPIRING FORCE

The ultimate religion, the religion of the future, must needs be not only a theory, but an *inspiration* as well. It must not only tell mankind what they are, what they need and should do, but it must bring with it an inspiring force which shall create in men a desire to be and a determination to do. Hence we find the religion of Jesus, the religion of the future, to be an inspiring love, applicable to all hearts in all lands.

As a worship Christianity is not a religion of fear and beats no tom-toms to keep off evil spirits; but it is the atmosphere of love and gladness and life. Here glad spirits meet around one common mercy seat. Here is found that "choice spot," into which all may climb and there, in the atmosphere of love, stand close beside the throne of God. Here we surely meet with God, feel his presence, and hear the music of the universe, the key to all melody. That eminence is the Temple of Love, and the inspiration of the music is surely Love itself.

But, as Boyd Carpenter puts it: "Seeing that only love can create love, love must be found in the object of worship as well as in the heart of the worshipers. In other words, the religion of the future must be based on a Person rather than an Idea."<sup>5</sup> In the recognition of this truth will be found the synthesis of the religion and morals of Christianity. To love God is to be like him; to be like him is to know him; and this interrelation of knowledge and likeness can only exist between living beings and the Living

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<sup>5</sup>"Permanent Element of Religion," Carpenter, Lecture VIII. (The Macmillan Co.)

One—"whose breath is their life and from whom they came and to whom they go." As the eye is for the beautiful and the ear for melody, so the heart is for love, and love is for God.

### NOT A CLASS RELIGION

The claims of Christianity to being the ultimate religion rest, also, upon the fact that it is not the friend, but the foe, of all class distinctions. Here pagan faiths find their limitations. While some of them hold to the sacredness of a cow because of her usefulness to the human family, they teach that a woman has no soul and the birth of a girl in a family is a visitation of the evil spirits and a calamity to the family. Considered as having no soul, woman has no place in the religious systems.

It is a fact of history that Christ was the first great religious teacher to admit women to all the institutions of discipleship. Women were among his closest friends and holiest saints. Lazarus, "whom Jesus loved," was not nearer to him than were his sisters, Mary and Martha; nor did anyone linger nearer in the desperate dark hour or was truer to him than Mary Magdalene, "last at the cross and first at the tomb." She, a woman, was first to feel the matchless thrill of the presence of the risen Lord and first to receive the gospel commission, "Go, tell" the glad message of the resurrection. And this to one who, according to pagan religion, had no soul!

All down the ages Christianity has made no distinction of sex, and none have entered into and appreciated more highly the religion of our Lord than have the women of Christendom. Often but for

them and their living fidelity Christianity had died out. To-day in missionary effort women have power and win hearts where others are denied admission. St. Paul states the great principle thus: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither *male nor female*: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,"<sup>6</sup> announcing a principle of Christianity which was unique in that it was not a faith of the masculine gender only. Man in tyrannical lordship had long relegated woman to a lower rank and called her the "weaker sex," but Christ gave her with others entrée to the inner chambers of the King's palace in religion. What other religion has ever taught this broad principle of faith, and where outside the domains of Christianity is there a territory ten miles square where woman is exalted and her honor safe? This glory Christianity would bring to all the world and every enslaved woman of earth's benighted races.

#### NOT A RELIGION OF A CASTE

Nor is Christianity the religion of any caste whatsoever. Her bitterest opponents and most difficult problems are found in those countries where for ages custom has allowed men to bind their fellows in caste bondage. Wherever caste is found, whether in ancient India with its high caste and low—out-castes in fact—dividing mankind of common blood into classes as distinct as if they were of different races, or whether in Europe with its aristocratic, peacock-titled class, or in America with its moneyed snob aristocracy—wherever found, caste is

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<sup>6</sup>Galatians iii. 28.

distinctly anti-Christian. In nothing is the gospel leaven more definitely at work than in the "melting pot" of American society. Here every one finds the God-given right of fellowship in the "brotherhood of man."

It was a sad fact that of the many nations engulfed in the World War, all but three of them were so-called Christian nations; yet not till then did this world-wide principle of Christianity find an occasion of universal application. Then it was that men from all around the earth stood shoulder to shoulder in the trenches and fought as brother for brother for "liberty," meaning the right to be recognized as man, having equal opportunity with all other men and so treated in all lands. It was Christianity which fanned this spark into a holy flame in the breast of men and nations. This same leaven at work abolished the traffic in African souls and rid the world of the curse of human slavery. The same spirit is seen at work to-day in the world-wide labor agitations as poor, half-awakened humanity strives blindly enough for a right which they instinctively feel to be their native heritage, little dreaming, however, that such a boon can be enjoyed only as the Spirit of Christ is faithfully and lovingly followed.

It may be a long journey to the realization of such a vision, and weary centuries may need to pass before the caste spirit is eliminated from human society; yet this is the task set before Christianity, and "the equal rights of man" is the light which gilds the hilltop of this far-distant hope.

Nor is Christianity the religion of the *educated few*.



Perhaps the noblest expression of the religion of this class is to be found in the "Phædo" dialogue of Socrates on "the immortality of the soul." This has the value almost of a voice from beyond, since it was Socrates' last discourse just before he drank the hemlock which caused his death. A nobler presentation of the doctrine could scarcely be made, yet it has faded from the opinions of men. It taught the immortality of the favored few, that the "Elysian Fields" were for the philosophers and for them alone. This was a fascinating doctrine and very flattering to the Grecian mind, but it failed of duration and long since gave place to a nobler belief of world-wide application. No one to-day would advocate such a faith. Such pagan philosophy has injected its beliefs into Christian theology and caused the Church no little confusion in all ages of its history. The Gnostics divided humanity into two camps. The one they called pneumatic, or "spiritual," whom they held were constitutionally receptive of Christ's revelation and eternal life. The other camp they called hylic, or "material," whom they considered were doomed to perish. This same "dualism" is kept afloat still in the doctrine of "election," which adds no little confusion to the Christian faith to-day. Hegel, the prince of German Gnosticism, taught that "religion is the knowledge reached (by speculative processes) by the finite spirit of its real nature as infinite spirit." "To adopt such a doctrine would be to close the doorway of the inner kingdom against all who did not possess the speculative truth."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>"Jesus and Christian Character," Peabody, pp. 176, 177. (The Macmillan Co.)

All this is class religion, and directly opposed to the "whosoever" of the Scriptures. St. Paul speaks of men "who by wisdom knew not God," intimating that by the intellect alone is not the way to know God or fulfill his will. Intellectualism was not a creed taught by our Lord Jesus Christ; nor did he rebuke Thomas for hesitating till he had fuller knowledge. Christ considered not so much the morality of an opinion as he did the morals which gave rise to the opinion, the motive and attitude of the thinker toward the truth. Obedient life rather than correct opinions was his key to all religious knowledge. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." While this obedience is possible to all men everywhere, intellectualism is not.

That "good science is good theology" may be true according to the interpretation given to the terms; but such expressions are usually the nomenclature of a cult, and this one hints of intellectualism. It is too narrow to express the genius of Christianity. He who would limit the Christian religion to a certain set of accepted opinions—a creed—or to the performance of certain pious acts, or to so much knowledge, or certain kinds of feelings, would cripple the religion of Jesus. He did not shut up the kingdom of heaven to any such narrowness. The "ancient law," which he incorporated into his teachings with certain addenda, was: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine *heart*, and with all thy *soul*, and with all thy *might*."<sup>8</sup> Not one of these powers to the exclusion of another, but all of them enter into the make-up of Christianity. Christ did

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<sup>8</sup>Deuteronomy vi. 5.

not shut the hope of eternal life up to intellectualism, or to science, or to any other class whatsoever. All such notions have gone or are destined to go down before the world-wide creed of Christ. In his registry are to be found the faithful of every state and station in life—the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the learned and the illiterate—all who with faith and loving obedience walk in his way.

Since Christianity lays claim to all the noble conditions of life and bids her followers to enter into them all, it would be a calamity if only the *élite*, the men of learning and luxury, had access to the Tree of Life. The call of Christ is not only to the favored few, but all mankind. "Whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely." This is a gospel principle of race-wide application, and is characteristic of the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### REDEEMED PERSONALITY

Human personality touched and purified by religion is the most dynamic force in the world. That Christ was the embodiment of all this is implied in his statement: "I am the light of the world." By this he did not mean the kind of light aglow in a diamond—a brilliant reflection, but dead. Light is the vitalizing agency of the world. The light of Christ is a life-giving power, is the whole of the gospel told in a single thought. *Light* and *life*—these two words hold in their grasp the entire sweep of world evangelization and progress. In whatever age or country the light of Christ has been let to shine, there life and hope and God have been found. The enthralling glory of Christ touched and transformed

the personality of his disciples and the first great apostle. The passion of the Orient is aglow in St. Paul's self-absorption in the metaphysical Christ. Said he: "For me to live is Christ. . . . I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Love and fiery devotion could go no further, unless it were to enlist that devotion in a world-saving enterprise for the purpose of bringing all others into the same knowledge of Christ and fiery devotion to him. Such is redeemed, Christianized personality.

The name of Christ was no fetish on the lips of the apostles to charm superstitious people; nor was it simply a spur to the emulation of a beautiful life and efficient career. That name carried with it a rapturous experience and a strong appeal to reason and conscience as well as the recognition of a world need and a race-wide panacea of relief.

Christianity stands aloft among the religions of earth as the only one with a world Redeemer and Saviour. It is seldom an issue as great as the superiority of the Christian religion over all other religions is put so sharply and demonstrated so thoroughly as this one was at the Congress of Religions in Chicago at the close of the last century. After other speakers had presented their religions, it came Dr. Joseph Cook's time to represent Christianity. In doing this he settled down to the one fact of the forgiveness of sins and the redemption of man. At this point he introduced Lady Macbeth, the murderess of her husband, with the crimson stains on her hands. However much she might wash her hands, saying, "Out, damned spot, out," the condemning stains remained. Turning to each of the representatives of the pagan



religions, Dr. Cook said: "Gentlemen, is there anything in your religions that can tell this woman how to get rid of this blood and guilt?" But no one made answer. Then he said: "I will ask another. John, can you tell this woman how to get rid of this sin?" Waiting a moment, he said: "Listen, John is speaking, and this is what he is saying: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'"

This is the climax of all religion, the cleansed heart and redeemed life. It is the sense of guilt fastening itself in the souls of all unredeemed men that disturbs the harmony of life. Mr. Kant said that there were two things that filled him with awe, "the starry heavens and human responsibility." This responsibility implies the sense of guilt. Without one there could not be the other. Where guilt is removed sin has been mastered and harmony restored, with life started anew on its upward flight. It was this that made the Cross mean so much to the world. This climactic fact gave the gospel extraordinary power in the days of the apostles. "Christ and him crucified," "Christ and the resurrection," "Christ the Saviour of the world," were themes with which the apostles startled the Gentile world. This was the keynote in St. Paul's evangelism and the secret of his marvelous zeal. With this he sought, to the utmost of his ability, to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. This same regenerating power has kept the kingdom alive all down the ages; and with the same enthusiasm men of to-day are carrying it to all the nations of the earth.

It is not simply that Christ was a wonderful teach-

er or a perfect man that men are seeking to make known to the world, but Christ as the *Crucified One*, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world! Everywhere men are dissatisfied, needy, sinful, sick. In all lands the same fatality attends unredeemed life. In the Far East, in all non-Christian lands, the same wretched conditions of mankind are recognized. The Chinese say: "We are in a great pit, but there is no one to help us out. We are sick and cannot heal ourselves." The Young Turks admit: "We know there is a better life just ahead, but we have not the power to grasp it." The Hindus know that Brahminism has no hope to offer. Neither the Grecian nor Roman religions had a redeemer. Mohammed had only a paradise of sensuality to offer.<sup>9</sup> All other religions stop short of a power for the thorough transformation of character. They contain no central Personality morally adequate to deal with the conscience, with the heart and will. They have no world Saviour, hence no personal Redeemer to offer. They are without the vitality that can give life to a soul dead in trespasses and in sin. "The more we study the pagan faith and estimate their fitness to administer to the needs of man, the more obvious becomes their moral inadequacy. They have heroes, sages, and prophets; but they have no one to take the place of Christ the Saviour of the world."<sup>10</sup>

It is the crowning glory of Christianity that it seeks man at his worst and brings him to his spiritual

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<sup>9</sup>Koran, chapter 78, "News," Sale tr.

<sup>10</sup>"Universal Element of the Christian Religion," Hall, pp. 195, 196. (Fleming H. Revell Co.)

best. It starts with the uprooting of sin, but does not stop short of the full measure of redeemed manhood. An empty life becomes a filled life; an incomplete life is transformed into a perfect life—all of which is accomplished through the grace and by the power of God. If a mountain must be measured by the difference between its loftiest peaks and its lowest valleys, a religion must be judged by its power to transform the most degraded into the most holy, into loftiness of life and character. In this respect Christianity stands without a peer.

In the course of human events and moral progress mankind must come to a realization of their need of a power greater than they possess by nature by which to perfect individual character and to guide the affairs of nations. Men are already coming to recognize the impotency of human nature and the inadequacy of the human intellect to achieve needed victory. The recent World War was a fearful demonstration of that fact. As mankind shall awaken more fully to their moral needs and shall receive more of the light of Christ, the clearer the "miracle of character"—the redemption and uplift of human personality—will appear as the glory of Christianity. Nor is there a limit to its power and achievement either in time or space. Its periphery is all the earth, and its promise is of power "unto the end of the world." There is every reason for believing that as time passes the Christian religion—with its power to re-create the fundamental instincts and faculties of the soul, to cleanse and direct the affections and endue with the power of the Spirit—shall triumph more and more and Christ stand forth before the

world as the "Desire of all nations," the Hope of humanity, and the Saviour of the world.

### GOD INCARNATE

Christianity is the religion of life, love, and salvation, because it is the religion of an Incarnate God. Many nations have had the conception of an exalted dynasty, such as the "divine right of kings." China is called the "Celestial Empire" because she taught that her rulers originally descended from heaven. On the same ground the Mikado of Japan to-day is called the "Grandson of Heaven." Greece had her Zeus Pater and Rome her Jupiter—Father god—the ruler of all the gods. But it remained for the Man of Galilee to teach all the world to pray: "Our Father, who art in heaven." He was first to reveal God as the Spiritual Father of us all.

The Christian idea of God is a God-Father revealing himself. How could God sensibly reveal himself except in human personality? He has manifested force in gravitation, energy in electricity, beauty in blossoms and in the sunset sky; but when he would reveal his moral beauty and grace he must needs get into human life and character. How else could he reveal the depths of his wonderful love except in the affections of his responsive children? Redeemed humanity is the avenue of God's world-wide revelation of himself. In Christ Jesus, God came into historical fullness of view in reconciling the world unto himself. In Christ Jesus dwelt the fullness of the God bodily. Christ found his ultimatum in God. Men find their ultimatum and come to their best in Christ Jesus. For this purpose



he lived—that men might find God through him. God in man is the region to which Christ would lead all trusting souls. This is redemption, this is the fullness of life and love and joy!

Christ has become the world's symbol for God. He was God incarnate; and Christ in us brings God into incarnation in every redeemed life. Dr. George A. Gordon is in error in saying: "There is in every man a genuine incarnation of God."<sup>11</sup> The unconditional incarnation would negate all redemption through Christ and abandon all need of him. The Saviour said: "He that hath my words and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. He that loveth me loveth my father also, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." This is genuine incarnation; but it is far from being in every man. This is incarnation through obedient love, and this is redemption. If words have specific meaning, this is what our Saviour meant to teach. He came to the world not to make a revelation of God, but to be one. He is the world's sovereign medium of God, the world's sovereign assurance of God. As prophet, priest, and king, God was with him. As Thomas Carlyle has said: "Higher hath the thought of man never gone." Can the thought of man reach higher? It has the unlimited nature and works of God in which to bask and revel and wonder, to soar and to sing! Throughout the realms of boundless space the soul may wing its flight abroad and revel in the wonders of God's goodness and love; but the beauty lies in the fact that his love is all around us

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<sup>11</sup>"Ultimate Conceptions of Faith," p. 249. (Houghton Mifflin Co.)

here and now. The soul does not have to lose itself in the nature of God, like a drop of water falling back into the sea, in order to realize the fullness of life. Here one really finds himself in the eternal reality of the divine presence and discovers what Lanier means when he writes:

As the marsh hen secretly builds on the watery sod,  
Behold I will build me a nest on the greatness of God:  
I will fly in the greatness of God as the marsh hen flies  
In the freedom that fills all the space 'twixt the marsh and  
the skies:

By so many roots as the marsh grass sends in the sod  
I will heartily lay me a-hold on the greatness of God.

Finding this fullness of life is to be in Christ as he was in the Father, and this is immortality—a blessed personal consciousness of fellowship with God in time and to all eternity. This is that high reality to which every redeemed child of God may aspire. Up to this sunlit height, this Mount Olympus where life is full and free and love is sane and sweet, Christ would lead all mankind there to abide in peace and redeemed safety.

Thus to a small degree we have arrived at a conception of Christianity as the ultimate religion—a religion of the Spirit, having as its goal fellowship with the divine Father in time and to all eternity, whose impersonation is the "Immanuel," the Infinite God incarnate, whose love includes all mankind, and is as great as the greatness of God.



## CHAPTER XV

RELIGION: THE INSTINCT OF IMMORTALITY



The "new psychology" school defines instinct as "an unlearned response to given stimuli," which would imply first an outward appeal answered by an inward impulse, a purely "modern" concept.

Mr. Edman states the case more accurately. He says: "An instinct is at once an unlearned mechanism for making the response and an unlearned tendency to make it."

Mr. McDougall defines thus: "Instinct is an inherited disposition which determines the possessor in respect to an object, to act in regard to it in a given manner, or at least to express an impulse to act."—"Human Traits and Their Social Significance," pages 19, 20 (Houghton Mifflin Co.).

## CHAPTER XV

### RELIGION: THE INSTINCT OF IMMORTALITY

IN speaking of religion as a soul instinct we feel that no violence is done to the correct use of language, and no offense should be taken either by psychologist or theologian, since the attempt with us each is to know what religion really is. In the further study of the human mind "primitive instincts" are coming to be more and more recognized, and religion is accorded a chief place among them. No one wants to call in question the greatness of this instinct; for when religion is reduced to its last analysis this is exactly what it is—an instinct of the soul as definite as any other impulse of man.

Instincts in general have been called the "unintelligible intelligence," because they bring to their possessor a shrewdness not acquired by experience and which the keenest intellect cannot always fathom. Now this is eminently true of religion. Man did not have to acquire it, nor is his tendency to worship a fixed habit of heredity.

Every life cell has its instinct, and every manifestation of original impulse is the assertion of an instinct. Such impulses are classified as belonging to that department of life where they are found. Very early in life there is manifest the instinct of hunger; this we call an animal instinct. We all feel that very early in life a child is but a "bundle of animal in-

instincts." His first cry of hunger is among his first natural miracles. Not to be impressed by such facts is to treat lightly the marvels of life with which we are surrounded. Such impulses are most properly classified as *animal instincts*.

Again in the further development of life, and perhaps as long as life lasts, there is felt a mysterious power which the possessor cannot fully understand, amounting in some to what is called a "natural gift," and in others to the wizard charm of genius. Its laws often baffle the shrewdest intellect, because it has a way of its own. Now, what shall we call this unless it be a *mental instinct*?

Further still there is at work in man a yet more mysterious power which deals exclusively with the moral nature of man, whispering the sense of duty and pointing to nobler things, awakening aspirations and cravings which cannot be satisfied by the material things of earth. This instinct differs from and is as much nobler than the mental instinct as that is more noble than the animal instinct. It has to do with the infinite reaches of the soul and as such calls for the special term of *soul instinct*. It is this master instinct in man which thrusts its importance upon us and demands investigation. To ignore it would be to that extent to leave ourselves in darkness.

#### REALM OF MYSTERY IN MAN

Man, with his marvelous make-up, has always been a most fascinating field for investigation. After all that has been discovered about him, he is still a mystery unto himself. There are still in his nature depths unsounded and continents still un-

discovered. In no department of his life has the last word yet been spoken; hence the unflagging interest in himself and the joy he feels on the discovery of new traits and when new laws are established.

Wise indeed is the man who knows how to read the code of his own being and can therefore interpret the voice of his soul. But who that has made the attempt has not found that to do so with certainty is a most difficult task? The reason for this is found in the fact that when our faculties are doing their work normally and undisturbed the machinery of life moves so harmoniously and quietly that it is next to impossible to discover the various parts, much less learn its laws. An old Scotch farmer, on being asked if he had good digestive organs, answered: "I denna ken that I ha' any a-tall." To the like inquiry Thomas Carlyle would have answered: "I have at the base of my being a diabolical instrument called a stomach." This he would have done because for well-nigh all his life that ill-working organ had made him terribly aware of its existence.

Ideal surroundings are never our best teachers. With every want supplied and every law obeyed, what incentive have we for investigation, what care we for delving into the mysteries of our being? We would want to eat, drink, and be merry and call ourselves blessed. But let something go wrong with the machine, let some law be violated and the harmony of nature be disturbed and life's music be interrupted, then it is that we want to find out about ourselves. By this method we discover the existence of our faculties and their laws. That "necessity is the mother of invention" is not only a truism in the



mechanical world, but is also a hinter of the laws of our being which come into recognition in many of the calamities of mankind. Then man's instincts are asserting themselves. Why is it that amid the best that earth can afford great souls will grow restless, refusing to be satisfied with those things which have lost their charm in their long, monotonous use, and will reach out after something beyond and better than anything ever yet known? Yielding to this discontent, man obeys the instinct of progress and finds the secret of all individual initiative and originality.

### SOME NOBLE INSTINCTS

That man is a creature of noble instincts cannot be denied. His nature and activities could never be rightly understood without recognizing such impulses. He holds his high station in the order of creation because of that natural endowment known as the "ethical nature of man"—that judgment seat to which all questions of a moral character are referred. This same sway of the ethical in man, "the still small voice," crowns him with the dignity of a king. In this realm, as sovereign of his own being, man awakes to the realization that he is not "altogether earthly," but is shot through with kinship with the divine. Yet while exercising this high prerogative man instinctively feels that he himself is somehow in subjection to a higher power, and is therefore in honor bound to be true—to what, he may not fully know. Men speak of being "answerable to humanity" or "accountable to history." They wish to stand well before their fellows, thus

unconsciously admitting the sway of the ethical instinct in themselves.

There is not a judicial procedure but rests upon this innate sense of oughtness. Here are discovered ethical principles of an abiding nature, such as are beyond the deductions of groping reason, yet are the most potent factors in man. We fail of correct analysis of man if we overlook this instinct of right and wrong, this passion for truth which rings clear in the soul of every noble human being. What migratory bird ever sang her springtime song with a surer instinct or purer joy than is felt by the noble hero who gives up life, at the stake even, rather than prove false to his conviction of the truth? This instinct is the glory of man's moral nature.

Nor have we been entirely true to the philosophy of life in our failure to recognize our mental instincts. We have been charmed by the skill of the mother bird in building her first "tiny infant's crib," when she weaves the downy substance on the inside of the nest for the protection of her tender fledglings; but we fail to appreciate the poetic foresight and tender care of a human mother whose heart is swept with rapturous thrill on clasping her tender babe to her breast for the first time. Here is manifest an intelligence not learned from books or acquired from long experience. Man often finds himself in the grasp of power which bears him on to actions by impulsive promptings, which not only indicate the essentials of life, but which outstrip plodding reason and challenge the admiration of the brightest minds. Such instincts supply the finest tones of the poetry of life. Here all genius expresses itself and real talent

is discovered. Thus the inventor accomplishes his wonders, the explorer finds his hidden paths, the musician sings his soul symphony, and the poet writes his immortal dramas. Thus Robert Stevenson, the engineer, in swinging his first tubular bridge across the Menia Straits, took little credit to himself, feeling that a power beyond himself held him in its grasp, enabled him to overcome immense difficulties and suggested to him many a new expedient. Also William Thackeray, in tracing his splendid thoughts upon the page, was amazed more than anyone else over their excellence; nor could he tell whence they came. "Borne on by instinctive genius," says Froude, "Cæsar won his great Gallic wars." By the same power Kepler read the matchless thoughts of God in the highest heavens, and Michael Faraday discovered them in the earth beneath. Thus King David awoke chords in tune with the infinite; and the captive bard burst forth in his immortal soul lyric of longing for the courts of Jehovah, the divine presence.

#### THE GREATEST INSTINCT

While the instinctive genius of man is expressing itself so marvelously in the mental realm, this is not the field of the highest expression of human instinct. That realm is within the soul of man. In his spiritual nature, his religious impulse, and his worship of the infinite God, man has ever been clad in a halo of mystery. This at its highest tide and in its most rapt frenzy passes beyond the reach of the rational. Man may not have been able always to give to himself, even, an adequate account of re-

ligious tendencies, nor has he been able to defend his worship of the divine Being; still he goes on worshipping. Nowhere is the great law of instinctive intelligence more manifest than in religion. Here man's sense of the essentials of life or his impulse to action waits not to be taught. Very early in the development of mind come the capacity and desire to know God. Who ever heard of an infidel child, or remembers when he first conceived the idea of God? "Heaven lies all about us in our infancy." Science in all its boasted geological records of the past has never dared to stake off the genesis of the religious age of man. Whence then came our religion and how so widely scattered over the earth?

Now, that we may not miss the way of truth, let us take a more intensive view of instincts as we find them. Wherever found they work by the same rule, and to discover this rule will help us no little in a perfect understanding of ourselves.

### MAN'S INSTINCTS RECOGNIZED

We have been so accustomed to recognize the marvelous in the instincts of the insects and animals as well as certain plants that we have lost sight of the fact that the same power is manifest in man. We have seen the caterpillar build his first cysalis without a mistake, and the oriole weave her swinging nest over a running stream and hatch her brood in safety. We have seen the young animal reach up with unerring aim for its food as the first effort of life; and we marvel at the unmatched skill of the ant and bee in the construction of their nest and the government of their colony with a skill rarely sur-



passed, if indeed equaled, by man's boasted intelligence. In the glare of all this we have concluded that man has no such power; and we have admitted readily enough "that instinct is at its minimum in man, while at its maximum in animals."

This power, which is at its maximum in animals and insects, works by a fixed law and to a limited extent. The bird builds a finished nest on her first attempt, and the bee fashions her honeycomb with mathematical exactness from the first effort, never making an attempt at improvement. They always follow the same plan, and have done so from the beginning. But in mankind instinctive impulses not only furnish man's powers of initiative, but lead onward to intelligent action, thus becoming the basis of vast endeavors. All knowledge as well as all religion has its beginning and many of its triumphs in instinctive impulse.

Have we been correctly cataloguing our impulses? While an infant has much to learn by experience, which the rational nature enables him to interpret and use to an advantage, there is never an hour in his life when his very existence may not depend upon his prompt surrender to certain forces which cannot be classified except as native instincts. That which in lower animals appears as blind impulse is carried on higher up in man to the point where rational powers can take hold of it as a life clue and personal willing becomes a conscious effort and motive of power. But who can tell where instinct ceased to act?

In the attempt to classify natural phenomena we have divided and subdivided our first impressions

till we have dislodged many of them from their rightful place. Many things that are called "innate ideas" and "subconscious mind" and "intuitive truths" are instinct waves, the product of man's original endowment. By no means does the exterior world or experience furnish exclusively the necessary data which influence our lives for the higher and better. A noble life is not made up altogether of meditative schemes and far-sighted deductions. We must admit of influences upon the inner being such as the senses can never supply—such as constitute that which must be recognized as religion and which thrusts itself upon us with immediate certainty. While these impulses do not furnish us with all the data of religion, they fail not to furnish the very basis upon which religion rests.

Religion furnishes us with the finest example of a dictionary definition of instinct—namely, "a natural and spontaneous propensity which moves without reasoning toward that which is essential to existence, preservation, and development."

#### SUBJECTIVE RELIGIOUS POLARITY

Implanted instinct furnished originally and still furnishes the tendency to seek God and worship him—man's noblest endowment. Nature nowhere furnishes an instinct more unmistakable, and no amount of adverse criticism can dislodge it from the heart of man. Here is firm footing; all else is sand and sea. Mr. Tyndall, with all his habits of close thinking, found himself shut up to the conclusion that "Religious feeling is as much a verity as any other part of man's consciousness, and against

it on the subjective side the waves of (adverse) science lash in vain."<sup>1</sup>

What impulse is clearer than man's polarity of soul? Instincts never lead to the abnormal; but they point to conditions which are agreeable, beneficial, and essential. This we find to hold good in religion. We are blessed and uplifted by it; we are consoled by its truths and our very being is fed by it. And no babe ever nestled down in its mother's embrace with a surer sense of rest and safety than is felt by the devout soul who commits his all to the keeping of an all-provident God. This he does with an instinctive faith which asks no proof of a logical kind; he "has the witness in himself" that all is well.

While enlightened people have supplanted instinctive tendencies with the authority of religion, there are no valid grounds for discrediting our soul instincts as the basis of man's religious nature. Out of this soil grows all that is noble and blessed in religion. Without it the Bible would be but a chronicle of the dead past and faith an impossibility.

### OBJECTIVE REALITY

The fact of instinctive impulse argues more than a mere meaningless, blind capacity. This subjective sense, this craving for a reality outside of ourselves, stands as the counterpart of another great fact—*the existence of the thing desired*. Instinctive promptings to actions of quest are not lost in the mere energy of desiring nor a mere exercise of soul. They are not without purpose, but are actions which seek

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<sup>1</sup>"Fragments of Science," 9th edition, p. 626. (D. Appleton Co.)

something essential to the life and well-being of the individual. No instinct ever led to an object which did not exist. Nature never prepared an organ for a function which was not a part of life. The captive beaver may build his dam across the dry floor of his prison, but for his imaginary stream there is the corresponding reality somewhere. No lungs or wings were ever created but called for the atmosphere. No plant ever turned its petals up to a sunless sky, and no songbird ever sang her song of a springtime that never came. The objective reality of the instinctive desire exists somewhere.

In the instincts of the soul more than anywhere else is to be found the highest expression of the law of objective reality of the thing desired. If it be an axiom of human reasoning that "for every adequate cause there must be a corresponding result," so also we may say that for every instinctive desire there must be a corresponding reality. Mankind has a natural longing for congenial spirits, and society is the objective reality. He has also an instinctive desire for the truth, and *fact* and the expression of reality are the counterparts of this instinct. The body realizes its longing and so does the mind, but how about the soul? This has its high demands, its intense desires; shall the lesser faculties of man be gratified in their instinctive longings, and the nobler part of man be denied? Man has in his nature the consciousness of a spiritual power and craves association with the divine. His soul cries out after God. Shall this cry be mocked by the echo of its own wail, be met by only the skeptical laugh of derision? Is it possible that man, of all creatures,



is the only one deceived when he surrenders himself to the sway of his highest and best instincts? Shall the faint spark of life in the insects find sure guidance and birds and bees be crowned with instinctive certainty in quest of their wants, while man, the noblest expression of God's creative genius, is left to grope in darkness all his days? Shall the ethereal thirst in the soul which reached out beyond time and space, foreshadowing unseen realities and immortal joys, be at last found the greatest of all deceptions? Nay, but there is no deception. As the sparkling brook flows, answering the thirst of the hunted hart, so there must be somewhere an answering reality to the soul's thirst for God. If there were no source of the spiritual attraction to cast about the soul its matchless magnetism, how account for the soul's instinctive polarity or the sense of the divine touch which rests and refreshes the soul as nothing else has ever done?

#### AFFECTION FOR GOD

Implanted in the soul of man there is not only the instinctive desire to know God and a capacity for that knowledge, but also a latent affection for him which when rightly developed brings the soul of the devout Christian a sure sense of sonship with God which grows inexpressibly sweet as the soul approximates God's majestic life.

He who would deny man's ability to find out God and love him finds himself confronted by far more difficult problems which call for solution. (1) He must not only account for the widespread prevalence of the idea of God, but (2) he must explain man's

soul longing for fellowship with God; (3) he must account for man's belief in his own immortality, and (4) also for the expectation that somehow he shall attain unto that blessed estate. All of these are in a measure instinctive in man and remain a part of him.

If there were no God, whence came this race-wide and persistent groping after eternal fellowship with him? Into the heart of every man there shines a gleam from afar which is the glory of his being. There is in every man an insistent hint foreshadowing an ideal goodness and greatness to which none of his fellows has ever yet attained. This impression may not remain fixed, but may flit and vanish and return again and again, ever keeping alive that dissatisfaction with the present attainment which every man feels. Even in the savage breast there is not lacking that faint whisper which tells him of a "happy hunting ground" which some day shall be his. Is there nothing of permanent value in the persistence with which the sorrowing and bereaved heart lingers about the scenes of the separation of loved ones, straining every power of vision to pierce the darkness or listening with bated breath to catch out of the deep silence some response to the heart's sad call? This dream of immortality is an essential in the structure of the soul, written there as plainly as form is described in the circle or existence is expressed in matter. There it stands as a constitutional element in man, and its originator is God, who is the perpetrator of no delusion. To suppose that this instinct of the soul has no counterpart with which it shall be satisfied would be to rob mankind

of the fulfillings of his highest hopes and make him, not the child of infinite goodness, but the victim of an archdeception.

Where is there a fact which could make the hope of immortality more sure? To some minds all this may seem but a vision and a dream of the poet's fancy. But to deny the fact would be to leave man surrounded by insolvable mystery and permeated with hopeless gloom as his heritage forever. Surely the hope of immortality has no firmer foundation than this of the objective reality of an instinctive longing—a fact fixed in the soul of man which cannot be gainsaid or otherwise explained. There it stands as one of the foundation principles of religion, steadfast and sure.

### THE MEANS OF REALIZATION

Nor is this yet all that may be discovered in the law of instinctive impulse as applied to religion. The assurance of objective reality as seen in an intuitive soul desire, even to the very existence of God himself, makes necessary another truth which is indeed the complement and climax of all the rest—namely, that between the soul having the longing and the objective Reality there must exist some medium of communication, some means of securing the end desired.

Between the soul and its spiritual Fountainhead there can be no impassable gulf fixed. The soul's passion for God has deepened its confidence in the faculty which is ever trying to find out God. It has never yet given over the search. The everlasting longing for God may be taken as an implicit capacity

to receive him and realize his presence. Instinctive wants have always found ways of coming into the possession of the thing really needed. Did fledgling in the nest ever feel the impulse to fly without finding pinions growing feathers for flight? Has the migratory instinct ever disturbed an ostrich which has never known real flight? In him there is contentment with his local habitation because the means of obtaining a better are wanting.

The agnostic may say, "If there is a God, I do not know it, and there is no way by which I may find him out," and he may be correctly reporting his materialistic philosophy (since spiritual things are spiritually discerned); but in so saying he is contradicting every expression of instinctive desire since the world began. The tiniest insect puts his boasted science to the blush. Think you that the all-wise Creator would plant in the soul this ceaseless longing for objective Reality and forget to build an approach to that intrinsic something? Shall the soul of man go hungry all its days and never be satisfied? The saints of all ages stand up in contradiction to such an idea. They bear witness against such a fallacy in terms of definite knowledge. They all testify to the fact that the human soul can and does know God, "whom to know aright is life eternal." That we may come into possession of this blessed Objective Reality, God in the richness of his wonderful love has drawn upon the resources of himself Incarnate, in consequence of which, through the Holy Spirit, saints find their hearts filled with such harmony with the infinite that they rejoice with certainty that they are the children of God. The same soul



who uttered the heart's wail, "When shall I come and appear before God?" "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord," also came to rejoice in the consciousness that "Jehovah is mine and I am his, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

### GOD'S WAYS ARE RATIONAL

To implant in the soul of man an instinctive and insatiate spiritual desire for exalted relation which only God's presence can give, and which can never be fully realized in this life, and deny the soul that presence and its full realizations would be as irrational as to equip a fish with an aquatic nature and furnish it no water in which to live. We must believe that the processes of nature are rational. On this assumption all faith rests and all science is built. Is it consistent with reason to suppose that nature, after long and laborious processes, has produced an intellectual creature who feels it his high duty to conform his life to eternal principles and to seek eternal ends, yet find himself limited to temporal conditions only? Was it rational to implant in the nature of man an instinctive longing after immortality if, as a matter of fact, he is only a creature of time? The chief question then is only the question of the reality and rationality of those impulses which man finds within himself. To implant in man a rational and moral nature and inspire him with a desire to seek after those spiritual ends which he cannot realize would be decidedly irrational and a waste of creative energy. But, as Aristotle has said, "God and nature never do anything in vain." How vain

would be man's highest cravings and noblest aspirations if there were no immortality! Just as knowledge is beginning to ripen and his character to mature, to collapse like a clod—what a vast waste of energy, what an irrational anticlimax! Such a deed would be totally unlike the doings of an all-wise Creator.

Since man has the instinctive desire for a greater life in order to be happy, reason demands that greater life, so that nature's ways may be justified. In the light of this fact we may fully appreciate John Fiske's remark when he says: "I believe in the immortality of the soul, not in the sense of believing in a demonstrated fact of science, but as a supreme act of faith in the reasonableness and rationality of God's works."

All atheism is an affront and insult to the intelligence of humanity. Man finds himself endowed with an ethical sense and is conscious of a moral law at work within his soul. He feels at least that there are certain laws which should be obeyed, certain acts that are right and certain others that are wrong; and this relation he feels has to do with the future weal and woe of his soul; and he expects the consequent results of such actions as confidently as a spider expects his spun web to furnish him his breakfast. With this impulse strong in his soul, the right-minded man orders the course of his life accordingly and rejoices to live for a higher purpose, avoiding the wrong and cultivating those things which make for righteousness and truth. This he does at all hazards, seriously desiring to do right in the sight of

God, feeling that "right is right, since God is God, and right the day must win."

But the atheist tells him that there is no such thing as "right in the sight of God, since there is no God, and no moral order in the world; that all good men's serious endeavors are futile; that there is no such thing as the fruition of consequences, since life is but a chaos where blind chance rules; that the universe is a gigantic freak of frivolity." Now, what is all this but an affront to the intelligence and moral instincts of mankind? In the light of the philosophic principle of *subjective* cognitions and impulses and the answering *objective realities*, together with the moral order of the universe, such an abortion of life's noble consequences would be next to the unthinkable.

### LIFE'S MOST POWERFUL INSTINCT

Let us consider life's most powerful instinct and learn the lesson of its laws. Such an instinct is a part of us and points to unseen depths of our nature. That impulse is the instinct of self-preservation, which in our temporal life has been called "the first law of nature," because it is the highest law. This classification we all recognize as correct; and as a law it has held good since the days of Job, who felt the same when he said: "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

This instinct manifests itself in ways vastly beyond the mere matter of personal safety in times of danger. A mere sense of fear would flee from danger; but this great instinct reaches beyond the immediate self and looks to the protection of those whom love

claims as its own and provides for them when its own days are done.

### PERPETUATING THE SPECIES

This impulse is recognized as the instinct of perpetuation of the species and is the strongest instinct known to nature. Though much abused at times, it reaches the sublime in heroic self-surrender in behalf of others. What skilled hunter has not witnessed this in the habits of animals having the care of their young? Animals such as the deer, that are naturally very shy, will linger in gunshot reach when a young fawn is hid near by. A mother quail will often feign lameness and hobble away, pretending to be unable to fly and scarcely able to walk, decoying the hunter away from her nestlings that are unable to fly, but secreted somewhere near by, for whose safety she exposes herself to danger and possible death. Where is there a nobler impulse in nature? Yet we see it daily in the entire investment of parents for the protection and well-being of their families or in the patriot who would make the "supreme sacrifice" for his country. We recognize the heroic in his beautiful patriotism or in the mother who immolates herself on the family altar without looking far enough to discover the most wonderful and powerful instinct back of such deeds—the selfless impulse, the highest of which humanity is capable. This is the supreme act of love, the sublime principle of our Christianity.

Viewed from a human standpoint, self-preservation may seem the "greatest law of nature," but when viewed from the spiritual hilltop, where shall



we find terms to describe such nobleness of life and character? Of such our Saviour said, "He that would lose his life shall save it"—not only save his soul life, but the life, natural and spiritual, of thousands of others. This is the law of propaganda in all religious effort. By it timid men and frail women have overpowered the most hostile heathen; by the same spirit "pacifists" have lifted belligerent nations out of their barbarism up into civilization and prosperous life. By it our blessed Lord chose to lift up and redeem a lost world. Men of mercenary minds are amazed that the apostles and other earnest Christians should give themselves to a cause incurring such hardships and often costing them their lives. They do not fathom St. Paul's thought when he says: "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." By such self-surrender he not only finds eternal life for himself, but also states the law by which Christ's kingdom was founded at the beginning and is pushed to earth's remotest bounds, and myriads of souls have entered it to find spiritual life here and hereafter to all eternity. This is the very climax of the religious instinct, the impulse of spiritual self-surrender for the salvation and eternal well-being of others. In such a paradox is found the strongest life dynamic known, the investment of faith, and spiritual propaganda which in its highest becomes the foretoken of immortality—a power which we may have felt and which has held us true to our soul's best, without our ever having known its source or fullness of meaning.

Far truer than we have thought, perhaps, is the

fact that every religious aspiration and better impulse is but an instinctive effort of the soul to rise toward an immortal existence, and to realize by anticipation something of the meaning of that Reality for which it has so strangely longed. Drawing nearer and still nearer to the source of this religious reality, the soul receives increasingly a new power and is transformed into a "new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Such an experience awakens in the soul new realizations, new ideals, and new hopes. He not only feels an insistent impulse to push forward to the land of the skies, but he feels a confident expectation of that blessed estate. With a habit born of long affiliation with things spiritual, the soul finds itself involuntarily reaching out in quest of an abode beyond the bounds of time and space and better suited to its nature than anything the earth can afford. "He seeks a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

The truly devout soul finds it beyond his ability to question the promptings of his religious instincts or the reality of a future state. Said the great apostle: "We *know* that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Such was the instinctive confidence of soul polarity. To deny the Christian this at life's close, not allowing him to realize that supreme desire, but find his expectations a fading dream, would be the most stupendous delusion and fraud in all the universe. But we know that the universe is not

built upon the basis of a fraud. Nay, but there is no fraud. If life has any realities, this is one.

After having centered all his soul's expectations on this one hope and on reaching life's evening hour, never did the sky redden with a surer promise of a fair to-morrow than is the instinctive assurance which is aglow in the heart of him who looks out into the unknown future with never a cloud in the sky and not a storm to disturb the serene seas. No caterpillar ever crept into his finished crysalis cell and fell to sleep with surer sense of a safe transition to a higher state than he feels who, "sustained and soothed by an unfaltering trust, wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams," ready in some fair land to be greeted, "Good morning!"

But whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality? . . .  
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us;  
'Tis Heaven itself that points out a hereafter  
And intimates eternity to man.<sup>2</sup>

"Life's mysteries all lead somewhere. The footprints of its myriads of wayfarers all point outward; nowhere can we find a returning trail. It is for the hope of that which lies at the end of the trail that we endure the hardships and difficulties of the journey. Humanity's great goals are farther than the earth. From some hilltop they take to the skies. Heaven is the trail's end. Heaven and God, happiness and peace, and home forever—it is true!"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Joseph Addison.

<sup>3</sup>"Elements of Personal Religion," Mitchell. (Methodist Book Concern.)

They who in this mundane life have, like children, been engaged with earthly toys—she with her dolls and he with his fancied wars and mimic kings and princes—will, in that world so often foretokened, lay such toys aside forever and take up those realities which furnished the stimuli of our greatest spiritual impulse—the master instinct fulfilled at last—immortal life attained, that for which mundane life was planned and perfected!





## CHAPTER XVI

LED OF THE SPIRIT: THE WAY OF SAFETY

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.”—*Isaiah xxx. 21.*

“If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”  
—*Matthew xv. 14*

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”—*John viii. 12.*

## CHAPTER XVI

### LED OF THE SPIRIT: THE WAY OF SAFETY

THE leadership of the Spirit is a moral necessity in the Christian life. The Holy Spirit is to Christianity what a general is to an organized army—the nucleus and guide of the entire body. For unity of life and action some such means is necessary. Our Saviour anticipated all this and amply provided for the need. He saw that his departure from earth would leave his disciples, who looked to him alone as having “the words of life,” as sheep not having a shepherd. And without the guiding Holy Spirit such would be the condition of Christians in all ages of Christendom.

At a most critical moment Jesus said to his disciples: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. . . . When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. . . . Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and show it unto you.”<sup>1</sup> Here we have three essentials to the Christian life: (1) The Comforter sent of God, (2) the Spirit of Truth and

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<sup>1</sup>John xiv., xvi.



revealer of the things of Jesus, and (3) the Guide to all truth. All these are absolutely essential to Christianity; nor can we imagine how without them there can be any such thing as a real Christian experience or victory in the religious life.

It is the guidance and tuition of the Spirit which give to Christianity its moral life and prestige in the world. This leadership, when truly followed, leads to spiritual victory; but when ignored or disobeyed certain defeat follows. Its repudiation is the real secret of the fruitlessness and defeat which have at times only troubled the Church in her illustrious career.

#### ESSENTIAL TO UNITY

A general is not more essential to the morale of an army than the leadership of the Spirit is to the accomplishment of that excellence for which our Saviour so devoutly prayed—namely: "*That they may all be one*, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." This being one in Christ never was designed to suppress our individuality or take away our liberty. Christ by no means intended to bring us all to be as so many cogs in a great wheel, all exactly alike, thinking and acting alike and driven by the same power. The accomplishment of such a fact would be to make our piety to be a vast prison house for souls. Yet in how many instances the attempt has been made to reduce all Christianity to just this routine, by dressing Church members in a kind of uniform, having them all try to think, act, and believe alike. This attempt has been back of much of the oppression and persecution of Christians; yet this kind of

“unity” is at variance with the laws of nature in her infinite variety; and to try to force this upon mankind would be to attempt the impossible and defeat the plans of God. The charm of life lies in its wide variety of expression. In a world of moral probation every man must think, act, and decide for himself. Upon this ground alone can one be himself and glorify God.

When led of the Spirit it is possible for us all to be one in Christ Jesus—one in heart, sympathy, and affection; one in fidelity to him who said: “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you.” When filled and swayed by the great power of that love, our individual characters will acquire a Christlikeness known in any land or age. Kings and subjects, princes and paupers, Orientals and Westerners—all alike have the same excellence of character when truly obedient to the Spirit and when they walk in the footprints of the Master.

When led of patriotism this is not the case. Hindu patriotism calls for the worship of ancestors, although certain classes are not allowed to do this. Hence the development of caste, which divides men of the same nationality as distinctively as if they were men of different blood. Being led of science, the spirit of learning made Greece hate Egypt and Egypt hate Greece. Being led of the sword, the spirit of mastery made Rome the ruler and tyrant of the world and militarism for centuries the dread of civilization; it also bred hate which smoldered like the sputterings of a volcano and repeatedly burst

forth in a world conflagration and nation-consuming conquests.

Following the lead of the Holy Spirit has given the world an awakening consciousness that "we are all of one blood," born of the same spiritual Heavenly Father, and also that to love one another is the goal of humanity's highest hope.

### THE "HOLY" SPIRIT

He who thinks, with J. Agar Beet, that "the Holy Spirit is the animating principle of all things which have life" has yet to learn the meaning of the word "holy"—that which leads to piety and the spiritual uplift of the soul by developing Christ-likeness in mankind. The men of this age have much to say of an impersonal Force at work in the world impelling mankind onward to the halcyon age, more intellectual and having a nearer approach to nature. We all gladly herald such a Power and recognize that Spirit in whom we "live, move, and have our being"; but only on certain conditions can we truly say that we are led of the Spirit; and that is when the trend is toward righteousness and "the mind that was in Christ Jesus" is also found in us. That was the mind of self-surrender, which would let go equality with God to save a lost world. When men forget this, then the trouble begins; then they strive after worldly glory, become bigoted and intolerant. Under such delusion there is no telling to what degenerate depths men may descend. Just this unholy ambition and corruption in the Church of the times gave occasion to such merciless infidel attacks as came from Voltaire, Ingersoll, and others,

mistaking the weakness and folly of men for the teachings of Christ. All this Antichrist, however, which usurps the throne of Christ, setting up the wills of men for the will of God, deserves just all such fiery denunciation, and even more. The demand must be made that the world's progress come from the Holy Spirit and not from designing men.

### TRY THE SPIRIT

False prophets, worshiping God with strange fire, have been the menace of Christianity from the beginning. The early disciples met with them in such men as Simon Magus and others who would make gain out of credulous people; hence the Apostle John wrote: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Now, this caution was intended to apply to teachers and preachers, and is most applicable even in this our day. But this testing the spirit should apply not only to others, but to our own spirits as well. In the matter of religious reality, the citadel of our own souls must be kept loyal to Christ. Men sometimes do some very foolish things, claiming to be led of the Spirit. Yet to know the will of God and to be led by his Spirit is the great essential in the Christian life. There is no one rule by which we may know this great secret, yet to know it and be led by it should be the one consuming desire of the soul. Not a great while ago one would hear the expression, "the mind of the Spirit." While this expression may be used as the merest cant, it should carry with it a world of meaning. The "mind of the Spirit" for us means



our frame of mind when completely dominated by the indwelling Holy Spirit and led by him. Do we no longer need for God to point out for us the more excellent way? Are the kaleidoscopic impulses of the human heart a safe pilot on life's tempestuous sea? How can we distinguish between the good and the bad in the multitude of alternatives which arise and tell which leads to safety and which to ruin? If God has established a polestar in holy living to indicate the safe haven, why not let its pull be the polarity of our souls? Why lie around like masses of brainless jellyfish waiting to be bumped into this or that line of life by a mere coincidence—"yielding to the situation," as modern psychologists say?

This "trying the Spirit" should be subjected to the severest test of the Scriptures, of self-commitment to God, of profound faith and the heartiest "waiting upon the Lord" to do his will. Even then much must be left to the human will and discretion. In no case will God remove the issues out of the hands of men.

### THE SOURCE OF GREAT ISSUES

This being "led of the Spirit" has been the source of innumerable great issues and great victories which have gilded the hilltops of history with imperishable glory. It may have been "yielding to a situation" that thrilled the disciples at Pentecost and made them new men full of strange power. But will not some one tell the origin of that "situation" which enabled them to "turn the world upside down," and whence it came? In those stormy days Paul went up to the feast at Jerusalem, not knowing what awaited him there, but he said, "I go bound of the



Spirit"; and that same "bound" led him to Rome, there to "stand before Cæsar also," and to plant in the West the seeds of a gospel which ultimately captured all Europe. Historians tell us that after much pleading before courts Columbus did succeed in finding one to help him fit out his small fleet of three ships to find a near way to the Indies. But never did men embark upon a more uncertain voyage or feel themselves more spellbound of the Spirit. With their friends on land pleading upon their knees for the protecting and guiding hand of God, Columbus, in the peak hour of religious heroism, set sail adown a stream, he knew not whither, to stumble upon the Western Hemisphere—a far more gold-bearing and eventful land than India ever was. Can this be called a mere accident in human events? The emigration of the Plymouth Fathers and Huguenots from their native lands rather than submit to coercion and Catholic persecution, to St. Bartholomew's day massacre, and to the fires of Smithfield, may seem to some a "yielding to a situation"—a giving away at the point of least resistance—but it would have been most difficult to have convinced the fathers thus. They came to the New World confidently believing that they were "led of the Spirit"; and while others came to America, North and South, to find gold, they came to find God and build a kingdom for him; and they and their descendants have written their convictions large in the generic laws and institutions of our land.

What was it astir in the hearts of the evangelicals of the English-speaking world in the eighteenth century which put them to reading the Bible in

spite of dungeon and halter and started the field preaching and special revival efforts which converted thousands and erected that bulwark of righteous thinking which turned back the wave of Revolution flowing in from France? Was it "yielding to a situation" when Jonathan Edwards—tall, lean, serious, and uninviting as a speaker, reading slowly but earnestly his terrible sermons to his Northampton congregation—started a wave of religious excitement which swept over the entire Connecticut valley and, being taken up by George Whitefield and his coworkers, rolled over the entire Colonial America, even down the Southern seacoast? Was there not evidence of the leading of the Holy Spirit in all this?

How else explain much in the trend of history? The "lure of gold" will not suffice; the "instinct of adventure" is too meager; the "spirit of the age" was not an adequate cause. All these are but surface indications of a more powerful agency. Among religious men the impulse was far different. Tell us, ye materialistic scientists, what great power drew into its mighty wave the bravest, sanest, and holiest men of those times and sent them across trackless seas, over lofty mountains, into dense and dangerous forests, and into the wilds of the West, there to plant the standard of the Cross on the outposts of an advancing civilization? These men went feeling called of God and led of the Spirit; so they did the heroic deeds of their history. Shall we traduce their memory, impeach their sanity, and rob them of the glory they achieved—the most illustrious in all history—by applying to their record the tests of a colorless philosophy of to-day and say that they

were not heroes, not men of action and character, but only entities tumbled about by circumstances as Socrates tumbled his tub? Far be it from us to rob them and the world of the one thing which gave them prestige and made their times memorable to all time. That one thing was the conviction that they were led of the Spirit of God.

How explain the movements of modern history which were strictly religious? It might be possible and profitable to trace the hand of God in many of the marvels of the times that are of a secular nature. The achievements in geological discoveries, in scientific feats, in the spread of liberty and a popular form of government, have all had behind them a "power which made for righteousness." The beacon lights of all such achievements have been men like Kepler, Isaac Newton, Agassiz, Faraday, "Chinese" Gordon, Livingstone, and even Thomas Edison—true men whose profound desire was to follow the leadership of the "spirit of Truth," and they attribute their success to this one source alone. Let it not be forgotten that after America's great President proclaimed noonday prayers by all loyal American citizens for the guidance and protection of Almighty God for the nation and her armies in the World War, not a single time after that epochal July day in 1918 did our Star-Spangled Banner ever droop or our advancing khaki-clad boys take a backward step or hesitate till victory had given the war-weary world the trophy of sweet peace once more. Glorious truth! But the problem at hand is to re-establish the truth of the leadership of the Spirit in things religious in the daily life of Christians. Not

without this, but with it, are the realities of the Christian religion at all to be experienced.

### THE CLOUDS WITHDRAW

That "prayer makes the darkened clouds withdraw" is more than a line of poetry; it is a dynamic fact. Under the spell of prayer how the gloom has lifted in the crucial hours of religious progress! Since the guidance of the Spirit is generic to Christianity, plotted as an integral part of its life, would it not seem strange and foolish to attempt to ignore it in religious experience? What attitude did our Saviour assume toward it, and did he place it among the actual values in his estimate of life's factors? How often during the progress of his teachings did he say, "Tell no man till the Son of Man shall come in his glory," and "Tarry ye at Jerusalem till ye are endued from power from on high." Why all this precaution? There was the greatest wisdom in it all. He was imparting some of the most essential and delicate truths in religion, which were ultimately to be passed on to the waiting world, and everything depended upon correctness of repetition. The Master did not want Christianity to "go astray from its birth, speaking lies"; and he knew that if men were to tell of the soul's redemptive joys they must know it themselves. Whenever an attempt was otherwise made a religious muddle has followed. So the injunction was: "Tarry at Jerusalem, wait till my plans are completed, receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Thrilled and made fit by this, you may go forth to witness for me and my kingdom." That was a spiritual kingdom of great



activity, as subsequent events revealed; and energetic action without safe guidance would lead to folly, to fanaticism. To speak for high heaven, God must instruct. In order to make progress in the redemption of mankind it was most essential then, as to-day, to be led of the Spirit; and without it there has never yet been made substantial and abiding progress in religion. All that pageantry of marching in the history of the Church, with the Cross as a symbol and the sword as a means of victory, may have indeed been a "conquest," but in place of of Christianizing paganism it only paganized the Church, doing more to defeat the progress of real Christianity than all the powers of evil otherwise combined, misguiding the trustful people and drenching the earth with saintly blood.

Blinded by sins and burdened by defeat, how many times the Church has gone to her knees in penitent pleading for the guidance of the Spirit, only to be lifted up into strength and to go forth unto joyous victory. When rightly accomplished the results have never been otherwise. Since the work is God's, is it anything but wise to expect him to be the Pilot on life's troubled seas?

#### AGE OF GREAT ACTIVITY

The accumulation of vast wealth, a greatly enlarged membership, and other stored-up forces, all acting in their normal Christian capacity, give our times a right to be called an age of great religious activity. All the issues of the times point in that direction. A better grasp of religious truth implies just this. The major work of Christianity is the



development of personality; and wherever personality is, there is creative activity. Then the task at present of rebuilding the chaotic world demands the greatest energy of mind, soul, and spirit. The world's finances must be redeemed or ruin will everywhere follow. We must Christianize the pagan world all about us, or it will paganize us. We must do or die; such is the law of life.

But in the sea swell of demands or opportunities, in religious matters as everywhere else, how great the danger encountered, how easy to get out of the great sea lane, off the track, and plunge the ship upon the treacherous rocks by mistaking the activities of the Church for religion itself. This is the *foremost menace to Christianity to-day*. The criterion of the day is not purity of heart and motive, not Christlikeness in character, but Church activity in consummating great enterprises, building great churches and raising vast sums of money. Nobody now ever reports the great piety of the people; it is always the "putting over" the big interest that is told—as if putting an army of a million or two across the Atlantic was the big job of the war, in comparison with which the nation's morale and the bravery of the men in arms were a mere incident.

Must he be condemned as a "prophet of evil" who would dare suggest that there might lurk an element of danger in all this marvelous activity? Overconfident souls pass on, thinking that all is well and that the Holy Spirit is leading, not dreaming of the mixture of evil that may be in it. But what are the lessons from history? One does not have to look far for an illustrious precedent. Take a case

from French history. During the reign of Louis XIV there swept over France a wave of royal popularity and national extravagance. Among other things there was a great building wave, at which time many national buildings were erected or enlarged. Mansard, the royal architect, was a man of wonderful designing skill and fond of magnificent display. During his administration immense sums were spent on the Royal Palace at Versailles<sup>2</sup> and other buildings which are still the delight of admiring eyes. Mansard was given full sway with his "magnificent buildments" as he called them; but all this magnificence was very expensive, and the money must be wrung out of the tax-burdened people. "The millions for buildments," together with other extravagances—considered no doubt the evidence of great prosperity—resulted in a national mutiny and wave of royal unpopularity, thus strengthening the republican sentiment, arousing the Huguenot element, and giving rise to a power which ultimately had to be reckoned with.

While this architectural extravagance may have been a mere coincidence, it gave rise to a wave such as the nation had never before known. This, together with other royal extravagances, in the opinion of M. Guizot, the historian, brought on the French Revolution, and later the Reign of Terror, when every man carried his dagger under his belt, brother

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<sup>2</sup>This historic palace, where in 1871 William of Prussia was made Emperor of Germany and where the Treaty of Peace after the World War was signed, was built at a cost of \$280,000,000, and is a marvel of architectural skill, extremely picturesque and beautiful.

feared to meet brother in the street, and the earth ran red with the blood of the guillotine.

### STARTING THE REFORMATION

The building of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, together with other magnificent cathedrals scattered over Europe, oppressed the Church for a thousand years. The raising of money for such purposes gave rise to such scandalous schemes as the sale of "indulgences" to sin. This being done in Wittenberg, Germany, by one John Tetzel so aroused the ire of the friar Martin Luther that he declared, "I shall beat a hole in his drum"; which he at once proceeded to do, thus uncorking the volcano of the Reformation which eventually broke the strength of the Catholic Church and dispelled its charm over men as nothing else has ever done, and from which it can never recover. This strife, lasting four hundred years, may be traced directly to the scandalous schemes to raise money to meet the extravagances of the Church in buildings and other papal follies.

Could all this by any possible figure of speech be called the "lead of the Spirit"? Are not such waves rather indicative of the schemes of ambitious men looking to their self-glorification and not to the glory of God? Such schemes have often done the Church great harm, and may do our age untold injury.

### THE PRESENT "GREAT MOVEMENTS"

It cannot be denied that in the constructive program of to-day there are to be found conditions which give occasion for alarm and cause many conscientious, clear-sighted souls sadness of heart.

The Spirit-led Church of necessity will have many and vast interests in hand looking to the advancement of the kingdom and the edification of believers. The apostles had all these things to look after, and our giving attention to them puts us in the direct apostolic line. Yet these things should be secondary. But what are the real conditions to a large extent in Church affairs to-day? Is it not a fact that we have, unconsciously enough, allowed the material interests of the Church to usurp the mind of the people? The "great interests" of the Church are absorbing the interests of the authorities to such an extent as to overshadow the one great purpose for which the Church exists. The passionate desire to save men—the conversion of souls and the edification of believers—has given place to the promotion of great interests and to the "putting over" of great financial "drives," till the pastor has become primarily a "promoter of movements rather than the herald of the passion of Christ." As a result, what wonder that the stamp of official efficiency is put upon the secular rather than the spiritual, and flaring financial reports are conditions of official preferment!

Yet all this is for the advancement of the kingdom, some one will say, and ultimately for the salvation of souls. But may it not be possible in all this great material advancement for the Church to find herself where Samson was—powerless, because his God had forsaken him and he knew it, not? May there not be wisdom in the alarm some feel for the safety of the Church and the spiritual welfare of her constituency?



## NOT TRUE TO THE GLEAM

The greatest mystery of all is in the failure of many worthy souls to recognize and ring true to the gleam of the Holy Spirit in many of the advanced movements of Christian history. They see no "guiding hand" in the advancement of learning in England in the sixteenth century; nor in the Age of Illuminism in France and Germany in the eighteenth century; nor yet in the Missionary Movement of the nineteenth century and later. It is true that the eighteenth century movement led to a breaking away from the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church and to the age of rationalism, giving the world such leaders in skeptical free thought as Voltaire, Bolingbroke, and Tom Paine—mere accidents these in the transition from darkness to light. But that age also produced such world leaders as Samuel Johnson, the two Pitts, Wesley and Whitefield, Robert Hall and Benjamin Franklin, and not least, George Washington. Stalwart Christians were these all! During this century the Church took a bound forward as never before in all of her history, registering an increase of one hundred per cent in membership in eighty-five years, whereas it had required four hundred years to accomplish the previous increase in like proportions.

## THE GREAT REVIVALS

It was during this period that the great revivals sprang up, the most famous being the "great awakening" in New England under the ministry of Jonathan Edwards. Following close on this came the great Kentucky meetings, which seemed to



be freest of human agency or deliberate planning. The most historic of them all were those in Logan County, of which Peter Cartwright and others give a glowing account. In that county there was an abandoned section called "Rogues Harbor," which lay in the backwoods then, to which only brave men with their lives in their hands would dare to go. The best of these were of pure Anglo-Saxon descent and of Scotch-Irish blood who had gone from Virginia, taking their families with them, many of whom were profoundly religious. The country was very fertile and promising, hence men of the most abandoned sort had settled there, and, as Cartwright says: "Refugees from almost all parts of the Union fled there to escape justice and punishment. Although there was law, it could not be executed, and society was in a desperate state. Murderers, horse thieves, highway robbers, and counterfeits fled here until they combined and actually formed a majority. The honest and civil part of the citizens would prosecute these wretches; but they would swear each other clear. They really put all law at defiance and carried on such desperate violence and outrage that the honest part of the citizens were driven to the necessity of taking the law into their own hands under the name of 'Regulators,' such was the desperate state of things."

Here the great Kentucky revival began. In 1796 there was invited to Logan County the very man for such a place—strong, fierce, with a thundering voice and terribly in earnest, yet full of holy zeal for souls and not afraid of man or devil. In his impassionate preaching, as Edwards used to say, "he shook them

over the pit of hell." His hearers were in fear and trembling, they were in tears, till the one subject among them was the salvation of their souls. The tidings spread slowly over the county, and in 1799 two brothers, the one a Presbyterian and the other a Methodist, named McGee, traveling through the country, turned aside to witness McGready's strange work in Logan County. They saw and took part in a great sacramental service. At the close the people seemed unwilling to leave the church, and the brothers remained to address them. Of this, John McGee writes: "There was a solemn weeping all over the house. At length I rose up and exhorted them to let the Lord God Omnipotent reign in their hearts, to submit to him, and their souls should live. Many broke silence. A woman shouted tremendously. I left the pulpit and went through the house shouting and exhorting with all possible ecstasy and energy; and the floor was soon covered with the slain of the Lord."

The people who had experienced this awakening went home, with their hearts burning, to tell what they had seen and communicate the news to others. Soon the whole State was in commotion. From a distance of forty, fifty, and even a hundred miles men traveled to the first camp meeting at the Gasper River, in the summer of 1800. They brought their families in covered wagons with food and bedding. The church was too small to hold the crowds, so the men made clearings in the forest, laying great trees in rows for seats. There they stayed from Friday till the close of the following week. On Saturday evening there was a giving away in hun-

dreds to excitement and prostration. After this camp meetings became common. At Cane Ridge in August, 1801, it was estimated that there were twenty thousand present.

The wave spread into all parts of the country, into North Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and westward as the migration went. While it lessened in force and much extravagance was indulged in at times, it became the stamp of revivals and is what the people mean by "the old-time religion." It reformed and civilized some of the worst and wildest districts of our country. "Careless men and women were made earnest-minded, the bonds of evil that held thousands were broken, the abandoned were purified, and ruffians were tamed. Places where life and property were not safe became the happy homes of Christian men and women." Reckless and wicked men became honest and faithful Christians. It was in this wild country and amid these conditions that the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was born.

Yet such a writer as George Stevens in theorizing over such movements, following the opinions of men like Max Nordau<sup>3</sup> and Gustave le Bon, classes such as "mass movements," and while recognizing their religious value, has nothing to say about any leadership of the Spirit. It is difficult to see how such waves can rightly be classed as "mass movements" when the pull was felt by individuals a hundred miles apart and long before they were drawn into a mass. True, there is such a thing possible to human-

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<sup>3</sup>"Psychology of the Christian Soul," Stevens, pp. 199 ff. (George H. Doran Co.)

ity as "mass movement," manifested in a mob or the charge of an attacking army. We call the impulse which took so many to California in 1849 "the gold fever," and the wild unruliness of a murderous crowd "the mob spirit." Then would it not be consistent in us to call that spirit which inclines men to seek righteousness by coming together in religious gatherings "the Holy Spirit"? If we ignore this Bible term to designate certain religious impulses, whose dictionary of terms shall we consult to find the right word to tell what we mean? Why thus deny the Holy Spirit in such epochal movements and in our own religious life?

Doubtless such silence concerning the leadership of the Spirit is due to a desire to be exceedingly accurate or "scientific," and rather than be called "unscientific" the producing cause of a great movement is entirely overlooked. The eyes of men are veiled and the hand of God hidden from view by the influence of the materialistic scientist who knows nothing of the movings of the Spirit of God. Here his science does not apply. How reduce to scientific formula the fact that a young Chinaman recently walked one hundred miles to be taught the "Jesus religion"? Or the facts of the life of Joseph Hardy Neesima, who came all the way from Japan, his native land, to Boston at his own expense to learn of Christianity, that he might return and become the benefactor of his own needy race? Who can read such facts and deny the leadership of the Spirit? But God is not confined to missionary history.

In this our day of complexed and confused issues,



when all the world lacks a leader and none dare say, "This is the way; walk ye in it," what a time to say, "Guide me, O thou great Jehovah!" We grope and blunder and go into religious defeat all because we fail to ask that we may receive, to seek that we may find, and to knock that the door may be opened unto us. Where now the sky is overshadowed, the way dark, and the grape harvest blighted in the gloom of an arctic night, there might be, under the leadership of the Spirit, a radiant sky, an Eshcol grape harvest amid the songs of the Beulah land of promise.

#### WHEN THE WAY IS DARK

Let none presume, because the path is not always bright with the sunlight, that the Spirit does not lead us there.

"Into each life some rain must fall,  
Some days must be dark and dreary."

There is always night somewhere. When the night falls and the way is dark, how natural to think that God has forgotten us. Yet everything depends upon our fidelity at the moment. The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted; and being true at every assault of the tempter, that same Spirit led him through the temptations out into the sunshine of eternal victory and gave the world a Redeemer who could claim its confidence, saying: "Be of good courage, I have overcome the world." God builds upon just this faithful following of the Spirit, and the "foundation of God standeth sure"; all else must fail.

Darkness is a medium of God's revelation of him-

self. We struggle unto victory; and we measure the triumphs by the trials. There are lightning flashes struck at midnight surpassing far the noonday glare. The celestial glory were not known but for the darkness of the night. So with our life. There is somewhere in every life a dark "valley and shadow of death" through which all must pass. We know of no life all sunshine. There are sorrows on every hand. The night came down on a raging battle in the Valley of Virginia during the Civil War, and Stonewall Jackson's men were commanded to "rest on their arms." The rain was falling, the night was dark, and by the lightning flashes the horse tracks could be seen full of water. A bright fire was ablaze in a near-by farmhouse, and one of the men said: "This is hard. Here we are lying in this mud and 'Old Jack' over there by that bright fire." The General spoke up: "No, boys, here I am in your midst." Was there any wonder that his men trusted and followed him as they did? Never is the Spirit more really with us to lead and to sustain than when the hour is darkest. It is then the world sees the *reality* of our religion. Whether we realize it or not, God is near; then our faith comes into play. In his darkest hour, destitute, forsaken, and sick, Job lifted up his soul and said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him," and in that hour established his integrity and his name forever. That was triumph, his sublime moment, for which the whole story was written! Previous to that hour God was unseen. After that Job could affirm: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee." If one wished to get facts on the hu-

manness of Jesus, and at the same time find proof that "he was in all points tempted like as we are," let him but stand at the foot of the Cross and hear the dying Saviour say: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet in that mysterious hour, as the keystone act of redemption was being accomplished, God had not forsaken his "well-beloved Son." But for that season of darkness mankind would have had no redemption. For this tragic act on the Cross the whole of the life of Christ was planned. Had he failed, had Job failed, or if we fail in the dark your, all were lost.

The way of the Spirit is not necessarily a royal path or a "flowery bed of ease." God has difficult tasks for his people to accomplish. Men of the finest mettle welcome the challenge to the noble task, no matter how difficult or perilous. Christ's appeal was to the heroic. He spoke of a cross, of self-denial, of hardness. Where the Spirit leads Christ is ever, and in his footsteps is the way of life, the blessed way of safety.

### VICTORIOUS RESIGNATION

To the pilgrim's vision the world is aptly typified by the Biblical figure of the "troubled sea of life." God's hosts all journey aboard the "Old Ship of Zion." This of course subjects them to seafaring rules and to the limitations of the vessel. But that does not make them galley slaves or prisoners. They are not tools to anybody's tyranny; but free souls traveling thus from choice. They deliberately chose their destination; they selected their good ship, picked their company, paid the fare, and set sail.

This of course fixed the conditions across the sea; they feel safe under the guidance of their great Pilot, who can land them where they could not safely go alone; hence they are contented and happy.

In the Christian life there is no slavish resignation to tyrannical conditions. We are not in bondage, but are free souls, preferring to do that which is right and guard with care the "passion for the better" within us. The true soul feels that he must affirm what he loves and what he thinks is right and true. At times to resign oneself to silence is a coward's part, and to do so would be to let slip the crown of life. The glory of resignation is lost to those who mask under the cloak of indolence of mind and prefer "peace at any price"—the perpetual capitulation to obstacles and threats, the passive humor which never resents being called "good-natured." Such a spirit could never conquer the raging sea of life or redeem our troubled times. To be content with the *status quo*, the unsatisfactory state of things, fearing to be called a "calamity howler," and to drift with the multitude, preferring to be in line with respectable conventionality, is to show oneself to be of slave's fiber. It is a "lap of luxury" to be satisfied with a crown of thorns.

Who dare to charge that Jesus taught any such a spirit or organized any such religion? He who does so is tragically in error and far from being a rightful expounder of its Founder. Jesus was an ever-ready antagonist to evil's bondage, a bow always strung, indomitable, fired with the hope of some day vanquishing evil and transforming the earth into the



kingdom of God. He himself likens his spirit to leaven, a most potent and energetic force, never at rest till the whole lump becomes leavened. His spirit never makes a compromise with anybody or anything. Incorruptible, he never lowered his sublime ideals to the level of egoisms or the world resigned to its own meanness. No effort seemed to him too great or conflict too sore; no suffering ever made him flinch. And since his entrance into history, he has been the inspirer of all uprisings for liberty, fraternity, and light. Victory for truth has always been accomplished by those who could not be resigned to conditions offensive to their convictions.

#### THE SPIRIT LEADS TO CONQUEST

Our present age is a "field in need of clearing"—nay, rather, a jungle beneath whose tangled mass lies untold wealth of soil and mineral deposits. Some shun the drudgery of clearing the ground and will not attack; others rebel and denounce, drifting hither and thither; while the rest do accept the task and attack with pick and ax, with flame and force. The spoils attract the "grafter," and his name is legion. While now there may seem the tumult and din of battle, and all confusion in the jungle depths, there shall come a time when a continent shall smile as a trophy to those who would not be satisfied with camouflage or a chaos of dross, but demanded *reality* and learned of Him whose followers are the rightful heirs of life's victories and true joys. Like all true worth, such victories will cost immensely, but will be worth the price. In all such conquests the Spirit leads the way and sure triumph follows.

It is a fact that the Spirit never makes an apostle or hero out of a corrupt or cowardly soul. Martyrs and reformers have in all ages been the truest and bravest of men; and to-day the appeal is to clean-souled men who are brave enough to stand with their Lord against all the world—men of personal knowledge of sins forgiven, who have the courage of their convictions, and who honor the Spirit by seeking his leadership. Such men hold the Bible to be the Word of God and Christ to be the Son of God who through him revealed himself to the world.

There are those to-day, as there always have been, who, together with their worldly churches, have scant use for the Holy Spirit and think it "wild enthusiasm" to talk of the conversion of souls or sonship with God and the witness of God's indwelling Spirit. Yet by this same agency God designs to redeem the world and make himself known to mankind. In all this vast process the Spirit-filled and Spirit-led man is God's hero and advance leader. And in all the great world movements where is there such morale among the soldiery, such a cause and such a training camp for heroes, as among those who champion the reality of the Jesus religion?

### A WORLD TASK THE GOAL

In keeping with the great foretelling, that "when the Comforter is come, he will lead into all truth, and reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," it has been, in recent years, the white man's burden to carry this truth to the uttermost parts of the earth. Such is his sense of duty

and compelling ideal; and nowhere is the leading of the Spirit more evident, and no task so fascinating as the world-wide uplift of mankind. As Dr. W. L. Watkinson so forcefully put it: "The bones of the English explorers, traders, and soldiers whiten every shore; they sleep in gloomy forests, in wild wildernesses, and beneath solitary seas. This the English nation has done not on mere secular grounds, but that she might serve dependent peoples and teach them how to live." This is the task of Christian civilization.

Till the Spirit led the way, the world had little conception of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The individual could lay claim to no rights. The will of the ruler was the law; the Kaiser could commit no sin. At will he could invade neighboring nations, lay waste their country, drive off their herds, and lead off the most beautiful women for slaves and wives. It fell to the lot of Spirit-led men to establish a social and commercial standard in all the world. If the Great War did nothing else, it established the Tribunal of Humanity before which even kings must stand and made sacred the individual rights of men.

To-day it is the true, Spirit-led men who exalt righteousness in the land. For their beacon light all the benighted world awaits. To fail of sending this light is to miss the world vision and fail of being mustered into line in the forward march and miss the inspiration of the hour and the joy of lifting up a needy world.

#### THE PRINCIPAL THOUGHT

Personality is the basis of all real religion, and for this reason it has been set in the open throughout

these pages. No other idea will answer the demands of Christianity. While ours is a social religion, binding men together the world around, and "team-work" is most effective in Christian effort, what is meant by "herd religion," in which the individual is submerged and lost to personal responsibility for world uplift, finds no advocacy in the régime of the Holy Spirit. Such a religion is not real nor dynamic.

Some men condemn glibly enough a corrupt church and a lagging Christianity, little thinking that they themselves are *particeps criminis* and should be heart-smitten over a defeat to which they have lent their influence. Not being a professed Christian or Church member does not exonerate anyone. All men are members of the great human family and are therefore in honor bound to bear a share in the world's welfare. If one repudiate this obligation and refuse to become religious, he is all the more reprehensible. If the Church lags, he is one of its hinderers.

How useless to fancy that the Holy Spirit will lead unholy men to save and uplift a doubting and denying age! Forward-looking men are men of faith, of prayer, and a holy trust. They know what real religion is, and they burn with a desire to bring it to all men. Such men have God with them. They, being led of the Spirit, become in far-reaching reality "world builders." They walk in the way of religious safety and experience the fulfillment of that promise: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This is God's will concerning us all, and this is dynamic.



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